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ABSTRACT

The first paper of this set of 12 conference papers, "Nine Learning Fallacies and Their Replacement by a National Strategy for Lifelong Learning," by Frank Coffield, synthesizes the opinions of other participants, and goes beyond them to set forth an outline of a strategy for lifelong learning in the United Kingdom. Following this introductory discussion, the following papers are included: (1) "Lifelong Learning and Learning Organizations: Twin Pillars of the Learning Society" (Lynne Chisholm); (2) "Lifelong Learning for All: International Experience and Comparisons" (Thomas Healy); (3) "The Policy of UK Government on Lifelong Learning" (Nick Stuart); (4) "A Tale of Three Little Pigs: Building the Learning Society with Straw" (Frank Coffield); (5) "The European Union and the Learning Society: Contested Sovereignty in an Age of Globalization" (John Field); (6) "Relations between Human and Social Capital" (Tom Schuller); (7) "Adult Participation in Learning: Can We Change the Pattern?" (Veronica McGivney); (8) "Employee Development Schemes: Panacea or Passing Fancy?" (Malcolm Maguire); (9) "Adult Guidance and the Learning Society: The Marketization of Guidance Services in the UK, France, and Germany" (Teresa Rees, Will Bartlett, and A. G. Watts); (10) "Employability versus Employment: The Individual and Organizational Challenge" (Brian Cooper); and (11) "Japan as a Learning Society: An Overall View by a European Sociologist" (Paolo Trivellato). Attachments provide notes on contributors and a list of conference participants. Each paper contains references. (Contains three tables and seven figures.) (SLD)

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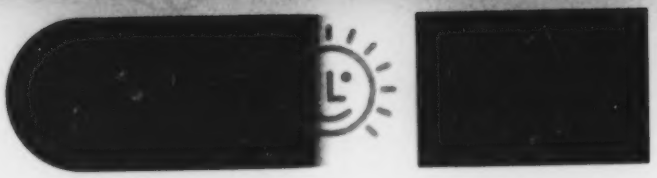

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NATIONAL STRATEGY

FOR

LIFELONG LEARNING

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NATIONAL STRATEGY

FOR

LIFELONG LEARNING

EDITED BY

FRANK COFFIELD

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INTRODUCTION

NINE LEARNING FALLACIES AND THEIR REPLACEMENT BY A NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR LIFELONG LEARNING

Frank Coffield
University of Newcastle

A NINE LEARNING FALLACIES

I survived the European Year of Lifelong Learning, but only just. The modern **via dolorosa** for anyone interested in the reform of education is to attend a series of conferences on Lifelong Learning where the modern lay preachers, equipped with slides which too often are all colour and no content, produce each year a new set of fashionable notions, uncritically presented and devoid of empirical evidence. In this way complex issues are treated superficially and empty clichés, mischievous half-truths and lazy catchphrases replace the struggle to address old, intractable problems like the inequalities created by class, gender and race. In Alfred Jarry's phrase, "clichés are the armature of the absolute".

Let me give an example. On a number of occasions at conferences to celebrate the European Year of Lifelong Learning in 1996 I was told (without any evidence being offered) that "in future, because of structural changes in the world of work, all employees must act as though they were self-employed". A moment's reflection suggests, however, that any employee who decided unilaterally to change his or her hours or conditions of work would soon be looking for another job. What is conveniently forgotten by the grey-suited gurus of the platform is the conflict of interests between employers and employees over such issues as pay, qualifications and flexibility. British employers are likely to ask of any new training scheme: will it improve the performance of workers on the job but will it also make it easier for them to leave the firm and take their skills to a rival? And managers who are themselves poorly educated and trained (of whom the UK has her fair share) may worry in case further training for workers upsets time-honoured hierarchies and privileges. Employees, on the other hand, are more interested in having training courses certificated and want their qualifications to be as portable as possible to help them cope with managements who downsize, delayer and contract out work. If companies are to become learning organizations, some resolution will have to be found between the management's need to have all employees committed to the goals of the firm and the employees' need to maintain and enhance their employability.

The rhetoric surrounding Lifelong Learning has also created an entirely new profession - the "learning philosophers", as they are called by Longworth and Davies (1996, p8). These are the new evangelists of learning who expatiate on the nine "learning beatitudes which might be emblazoned on the walls of every classroom, common room and workplace" (ibid., p24). These "beatitudes" are a set of worthy propositions which claim that "learning pays", "learning empowers" and "learning civilises" etc ... It is the safe, middle-class view of learning, propounded by those who have succeeded in our formerly elite system of education and whose learning has indeed paid off handsomely for them. But they tend to know nothing, for instance, of the 100,000 unemployed people who are studying on benefit in Further Education colleges (Kennedy, 1997), a fifth of whom are forced each year to withdraw from their course to take short-term unskilled jobs[1].

In order to come to a more balanced view of the task of creating a Learning Society in the UK, the nine "learning beatitudes" need to be offset by what I shall call the nine "learning fallacies" which have been distilled from a large number of speeches at conferences during 1996 and which are briefly described below. The identity of the original authors of the quotations which introduce each fallacy will not be revealed to spare the blushes of the perpetrators:

1. *"The most important form of capital in the global market is human capital"*. In some formulations this becomes *"The only form of capital which is important now is human capital"*.

This inflated claim is the conventional wisdom of the educational and business lecturing circuit. As was said twenty years ago about I.Q., there is no idea so stupid that most people will reject it provided that enough powerful people around them are promoting the same stupid idea. But the continuing attraction of the theory of human capital lies in its comforting ideology which deflects attention away from the structural causes of poverty onto individuals. Yet twenty years ago Karabel and Halsey detailed the theoretical and empirical shortcomings of human capital (e.g. simple input-output models ignore the critical intervening activities of teaching and learning) and concluded that it did not "provide an adequate framework for understanding the relationship between education and the economy" (1997, p15). Certainly, a national strategy for Lifelong Learning cannot be built on such a shaky foundation.

This fallacy is not being promoted by a few harmless eccentrics but appears to be part and parcel of the thinking of the new Secretary of State for Education[2] and of some of his most influential advisers[3]. It is certainly one of the key notions behind the National Campaign for Learning - "the education and training of the workforce is the single most important characteristic in determining economic performance", according to Sir Christopher Ball (1992). He has, however, more recently been forced to concede that "a world-class workforce may well not be a sufficient condition for international success, but it is almost certainly a necessary condition" (1995, p20). Similarly, in the USA, President Clinton's former Secretary of Labour, Robert Reich, who in 1993 was proclaiming that "each nation's primary assets will be its citizens' skills and insights" (p3) is now arguing that "without sufficient macroeconomic demand, better education and training mean little; even well-trained workers will sit on their hands" (1997). What is needed are policies which will impact on **demand** as well as on supply; for example, British firms need to be encouraged to upgrade their production strategies in favour of high value goods and services. To achieve economic prosperity and social cohesion, a complex set of political and socio-economic factors need to interact harmoniously in one coherent strategy (of which more later) rather than all our hopes being invested in one lop-sided and inadequate proposition.

2. *"Lifelong Learning will transform the educational curriculum from one based on knowledge to one based on individual skills"*.

What invariably follows such a statement is a long, dreary list of skills which future workers will allegedly require - teamwork, problem-solving, creativity etc - as though complex problems could be solved creatively by teams who are not in possession of relevant knowledge. Ian Jamieson has argued that such lists are "...beset by all the usual problems of asking employers about what they want (for today? for tomorrow? for which level of employee?), let alone questions about the basis on which they give us their answers" (1996, p2). Besides, researchers have recently demonstrated a wide gulf between what employers claim to be the essential attributes of future employees and their current recruitment policy, which is "guided by prejudice, preconceptions and bureaucratic pragmatism, directed towards reproduction of the prevailing culture" (Harvey, Moon and Geall, 1997, p3). What is being forgotten in the discourse on

Lifelong Learning is Daniel Bell's claim more than twenty years ago that the post-industrial society will be centred on "theoretical knowledge as the source of innovation and of policy formulation" (1974, p14). Indeed for Bell, theoretical knowledge is *the* axial principle around which the post-industrial society is organised. The notion of either a knowledge-free curriculum or of a content-free pedagogy is a manifest absurdity.

3. *"There's no such thing as a non-learner. We're all learning all the time".*

I learned today that Jack London was Lenin's favourite novelist, that Studley Castle is situated just outside Redditch and that, yet again, I haven't won the National Lottery but the UK is no closer to becoming a Learning Society as a consequence. Michael Barber thinks we can help to create a Learning Society in this country by asking each other at parties "what did you learn today?" (1996, p304). This is to trivialise both the size and the nature of the task facing this country. In contrast, Michael Eraut has suggested that "...the use of the word **learning** in the phrase **The Learning Society** should refer only to **significant changes in capability or understanding**, and exclude the acquisition of further information when it does not contribute to such changes" (1997, p10. Emphasis as in original).

4. *"A strategy for Lifelong Learning can be created by combining together all existing initiatives for the various phases of education from pre-school to adult education".*

A report[4] on the future of education in Europe aims to "mobilise the full potential of the whole" education system by building more and better bridges between its various elements (Cochinaux and de Woot, 1995, p56). But professionals and policy makers, especially in the UK, are committed to a particular phase (e.g. primary or FE) and few, if any, owe loyalty to the overall concept of Lifelong Learning which remains an unloved and an empty one. As a result the first law of Gestalt psychology is set aside in that at present the whole of the education system amounts to *less* than the sum of its parts. We need policies which will encourage all education professionals to think and act *cross-sectorally*, as Veronica McGivney has argued (1996, private communication); and yet suggestions earlier in the summer that more resource should be allocated to FE provoked a predictable response from the HE sector. Lifelong Learning should be the overarching concept which brings the divisions within the DfEE (and within the education system) closer together. It should be possible to judge whether that is starting to happen by examining how closely the White Paper on Lifelong Learning is co-ordinated with the White Paper, *Excellence in Schools* (DfEE, 1997).

The research of Tom Schuller and John Field within the Economic and Social Research Council's (ESRC) *Learning Society Programme*[5] points up the lack of progression and continuity from one phase of education to the next. For example, in both Scotland and Northern Ireland achievement in initial education is relatively high compared with the rest of the UK , but participation in adult education and training is relatively low. So there is no guarantee that even those who perform well in compulsory schooling will become Lifelong Learners. Far from developing a love of learning in all their students, too many educational institutions turn even some of their brightest students into

instrumental learners who are interested only in qualifications and who adopt a "surface" approach to their studies which inhibits "deep", high quality learning (Entwistle, 1992). A strategy for Lifelong Learning will also have to propose effective means of re-engaging those who did not receive an adequate basic education in the first place: "over half our young people leave school without the initial foundation platform of five GCSEs at grade C or above" (Kennedy Report, 1997, p28) and around 50,000 youngsters or 8 per cent leave school each year without a qualification of any kind (DfEE, 1997, p79). The market principle in education and the consequent pre-occupation with school league tables has intensified the comparative neglect of those towards the bottom of the system.

5. *"Learning is individual. It is often pursued in groups, but the experience is uniquely personal. Learning theory examines how learning takes place within individuals".*

Such statements represent the continuing influence of an outmoded version of individual psychology which continues to be advocated by some educational psychologists. More recent accounts of learning locate it squarely in the processes of social participation, not in the heads of individuals and seek to rescue the idea of cognitive apprenticeship (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Recently, David Hargreaves has argued that the education and training system ought to be "providing more opportunities where more learning is modelled on apprenticeship" (1997, p6). As I explore this topic in my article later in this collection, no more will be said here (see Chapter 4).

6. *"A Learning Society can be created by passing the main responsibility to individuals".*

Such a claim is a cowardly cop out for government, employers and institutions. The creation of a new form of society cannot be placed solely on the shoulders of individuals but must become a joint responsibility of all the social partners. Again, this is the main theme of my contribution to this volume and so the reader is referred to that article (Chapter 4).

7. *"All children can succeed at school provided the leadership of the head is effective".*

Sometimes the magic wand waved over schools is higher expectations of students by teachers, or more regular testing or some other panacea. There are two separate fallacies here which need to be disentangled. First, the complex findings of a body of research, say, on school effectiveness are reduced at conferences to "commonsense recipes" by those who have not read the original reports (and occasionally by one or two who wrote them), which contain caveats about treating a framework for thinking as a blueprint for implementing change. There is, however, a further difficulty which has been well captured by Geoff Whitty: "... quick-fix solutions to enduring educational dilemmas, whether of a political or professional nature, are likely to have only limited impact ... Certainly the more optimistic versions of work [on school effectiveness] tend to exaggerate the extent to which local agency can challenge structural inequalities" (1997, p15).

8. *"We can now safely forget about teaching. The focus of attention must now be on learning".*

But students are unlikely to become Lifelong Learners and collaborative creators of knowledge if their teachers are not themselves Lifelong Learners who know how to pass on a love of learning to their students. If a major break is being advocated away from the currently dominant transmission model of teaching towards a more collaborative style of learning, then the initial and inservice education of teachers will have to be transformed but not in the ways currently being advocated by the Teacher Training Agency. In other words, teachers and teacher trainers are pivotal to any move towards a Learning Society. The current fashion at Conferences on Lifelong Learning, however, is to lambast teaching and to eulogise learning instead of understanding them, not as two distinct activities, but as elements of a single, reciprocal process. The art lies in creating a balance between teachers who can inspire and challenge students without making them overly dependent as learners or unable to go beyond what they have been taught. David Hargreaves' sharp question remains to be answered: "Is teaching a profession appropriate for a life-long career?" (1994, p3).

9. *"Learning is fun or always should be."*

This is the claim often made by speakers at the end of a tiresome lecture. Classic FM espouses a similar view of music. The experience of most people suggests, however, that learning is often difficult and disturbing and that growth often results from hard graft and disconcerting struggle. In the words of Michael Fullan "...learning a new skill and entertaining new conceptions create doubts and feelings of awkwardness or incompetence, especially when we first try something" (1991, p46), hence the need to create safe environments to encourage people to take the risk of learning. Michael Oakshott thought that the difficult engagement of learning called for humility, patience and courage and Philip Jackson summed up the argument as follows : "no-one except a sadist would advocate the introduction of discomfort and suffering into the educational process for their own sake... But the crucial question is : how much discomfort can be eliminated from the educative process without risking the loss of something even more important than relative comfort - education itself?" (1986, p111).

B NEWCASTLE CONFERENCE ON LIFELONG LEARNING

The above represent my reflections on the conferences I attended in 1996 **before** the one held at Close House in the University of Newcastle from Monday, 25 to Wednesday, 27 November, 1996. This international conference, which was entitled "*Research on Lifelong Learning : Implications for Policy and Practice*", was in the view of the participants, as expressed in their evaluations, wonderfully unlike its predecessors. The unusually high quality of the main speakers and of the group discussions helps to explain that reaction as does the attempt by most speakers to move away from the windy generalizations which so often surround the topic of Lifelong Learning and to begin to tease out implications for policy and practice from their research.

The Newcastle Conference was itself part of the European Year of Lifelong Learning and was sponsored by the European Commission, The University of Newcastle, Tyneside Training and Enterprise Council (TEC), Northumberland TEC, County Durham TEC, Sunderland City

TEC, the Northern Development Company, Scottish and Newcastle Breweries, and Procter and Gamble. The financial support of all these organizations is gratefully acknowledged. The University of Newcastle hosted the event at Close House and the Senior Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Professor Richard Bailey, welcomed guests and participants on behalf of the University. The conference was organised under the aegis of *The Learning Society Programme* - an Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Programme into *Knowledge and Skills for Employment* in the 21st Century.

The general aims of the Conference were to raise awareness of, and commitment to, Lifelong Learning and to explore the challenges it presents to current practices in industry and in education. The third aim was to encourage active collaboration between a number of different sectors including industry and commerce, the Trade Unions, the local TECs and the Northern Development Company, education (e.g. Comprehensive Schools and middle managers from Further Education Colleges), senior management in Universities, researchers specialising in the area of Lifelong Learning from the UK, Europe and further afield (e.g. Japan and USA), independent consultants, voluntary organizations, trainers and career specialists, city officials from Newcastle, and, last but by no means least, the European Commission, DGXXII (Brussels), the Department for Education and Employment (London) and OECD (Paris).

The specific purpose was to explore the implications of *research* into Lifelong Learning for policy and practice. It was the focus on *research* which made this conference different and therefore right and proper for a university to take the lead in organising it. The final objective was to stress the international dimension of Lifelong Learning and what we in the UK can learn from initiatives, strategies and research in other countries such as Japan which are thought by many to be further down the road than the UK to becoming a Learning Society; hence the challenging paper in this collection by Paolo Trivellato. There is also a specific European dimension to the topic, for example, the European Union as a regional trading bloc considers that its competitive position in relation to Japan and the USA has worsened over the last twenty years (EC, 1995, p9). So European citizens face some serious problems and challenges in common to which many people think Lifelong Learning is part of the answer.

The plan behind the Programme was to provide participants with overviews of research on Lifelong Learning already completed or in progress, of policy on Lifelong Learning at European and British government levels, and of international comparisons. Opportunities were also provided for international, national and local specialists to present descriptions or evaluations of particular initiatives; unfortunately, for reasons of space, it has not been possible to include these in this report.

The outcomes from the conference have been of two main kinds. First, a World Wide Web site for the conference was established and the address is http://www.ncl.ac.uk/~nfjc/ and *all* the papers which were subsequently sent to myself as organiser have been put on the World Wide Web. Second, this volume produces in hard copy eleven of the main papers delivered at the conference, together with this Introduction, notes on contributors (in Annex 1) and a list of participants (in Annex 2). I want to acknowledge the help of Dorothy Smith, Jane White, Val Adams and Caron Currie in organising the conference and producing this report.

C A NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR LIFELONG LEARNING

The conventional way of introducing a set of conference papers is to choose a number of integrating themes or central tensions which had surfaced at different times and places throughout the three days of discussion and, in doing so, to quote approvingly a few telling phrases from each of the contributions which make up the final report. I propose to depart from this tradition by offering in its place a first draft of a new, *National Strategy for Lifelong Learning*, which takes as its starting point the suggestions for policy provided by the speakers and participants at the conference. I have synthesised their recommendations but I alone should be held responsible for what follows because at times this approach entails challenging or going beyond the arguments of some of the speakers, or integrating the findings of two or more contributors, or striking out into territory where there is at present little hard evidence.

Three further, introductory points. Whatever its faults and limitations, I have sketched the outline of a national policy for Lifelong Learning because the time has come to move beyond the wordy rationales for Lifelong Learning which have been repeated *ad nauseam* at conferences for over twenty years without changing much in practice. So this personal paper, which is neither a contrived consensus nor a detailed blueprint, is presented both as a rough sketch of a strategy around which it is hoped other and better ideas will gather, and as an overt acceptance of an obligation to move beyond identifying fallacies to replacing them with more constructive ways forward. It is also offered as a contribution to the public debate which urgently needs to take place about the future of the UK, a debate which it is hoped will be sparked off by the publication of the Government's White Paper on Lifelong Learning in November,1997.

Second, this preliminary version of a *National Strategy for Lifelong Learning* has been based on my understanding of existing research and at a time when the earliest findings from the ESRC's *Learning Society Programme* are just beginning to come on stream. The intention is to improve this first model as the findings from the fourteen projects become available over the next two years.

Third, we are unlikely to make progress unless we are honest with, and about, ourselves. Let me give a few, concise examples drawn from observations made at the conference. The UK is *not* at present a Learning Society, *nor* does it have a culture of Lifelong Learning *nor* even a training culture. Previous attempts in the 1970s in Europe and North America to make Lifelong Learning "the master concept of educational policies" (Edgar Faure, 1972, p187) ended in failure. That overworked euphemism "parity of esteem" must give way to anger about sharpening polarization and unjustifiable inequalities. The long series of schemes of Youth Training also failed to produce a high quality track from school to work and for too many proved a dead end without access to employment or further learning. Government programmes to encourage small firms to invest in the training of their employees are foundering and the conclusion to be drawn is that we shall not develop a training culture where none exists by expecting small and medium sized enterprises to pay. Besides, the market principle, as it has been applied to the systems of education and training in the UK, has exacerbated rather than mitigated social divisions. The key research finding that is repeated in paper after paper in this volume is that those who benefited most from initial education continue to get most out of whatever training or education is subsequently offered. In other words, the structure of the current system continues to create, generation after generation, a learning and training underclass, which is deeply inimical to the creation of a Learning Society.

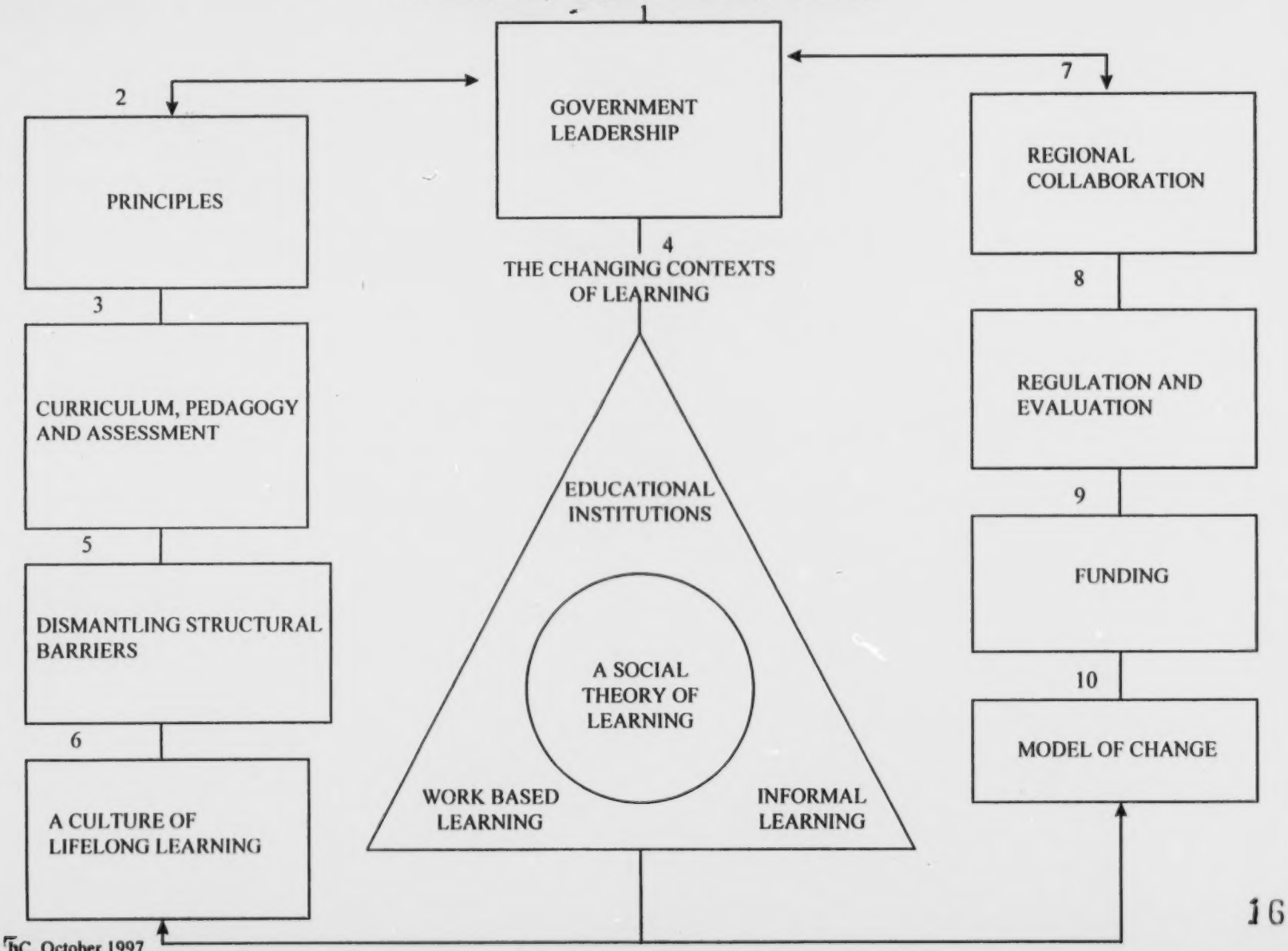
A few more examples. The "body language" of our most distinguished educational institutions contradicts their pretentious mission statements about equal opportunities and inclusive policies by indicating to many would-be students that "real" education is not for the likes of them. The language of "partnership" was also employed by previous Conservative governments as camouflage for their policy of transferring greater financial responsibility from the taxpayer on to employers and individuals. In more detail, the DfEE's 1996 Policy Framework for Lifetime Learning talked of "effective partnerships" and yet nowhere in its thirty pages did it once mention the Trade Unions. Such action has given the decent word "partnership" ideological connotations from which it will take time to recover. Again, the cause of creating a Learning Society is not promoted by pretending that the main barriers to progress are "confidence/capability, time/space, access and cost", as the TEC National Council claims in an otherwise useful publication (1997, p30). The main barriers are *structural* rather than individual and include antithetical government policies, a private educational sector which perpetuates class divisions and social networks of advantage (see Keep and Mayhew, 1996), and an historical, cultural and institutional split between the academic and the vocational.

New proposals for a *National Strategy for Lifelong Learning* also need to avoid the false starts, mistaken assumptions and timidity of previous efforts. The strategy proposed here deliberately incorporates the strengths of other frameworks which have been proposed (e.g. CBI, 1995; Dearing Report, 1997; Kennedy Report, 1995; Labour Party, 1995; OECD, 1996; TEC National Council, 1997; TUC, 1995 and 1996 etc.), but two reports in particular are set apart for criticism to emphasize the mistakes which must be avoided: the EC White Paper (1995) *Teaching and Learning : Towards The Learning Society* and the DfEE's (1996) publication *Lifetime Learning : a policy framework*.

John Field (in this volume) argues persuasively that the EC's 1995 White Paper is essentially a cautious and conservative document which mobilises a discourse of crisis in analysing the lifelong challenges faced by Europeans but which limits its recommendations to the schooling system. Similarly, the White Paper uses the language of "a citizen's Europe", but has no proposals to offer active citizenship beyond support for a European voluntary service for young people. As mentioned previously, the pivotal role in constructing the Learning Society is given to individuals by the White Paper without providing them with the power to effect change (see Keep, 1997).

At least the EC's White Paper openly acknowledges the "risk of a social rift" as several categories of the population are becoming increasingly marginalized by structural, economic change. The British policy framework on Lifelong Learning is in contrast totally silent on polarization within the UK. The previous Conservative government's policy on Lifelong Learning can be characterized as consisting of an endlessly changing set of short term initiatives rather than a coherent strategy, as each new Minister's career required another short-lived, pilot scheme to be launched, complete with a new acronym. The DfEE's policy, as outlined by Nick Stuart in this volume, had six elements, but no leadership role was found for government - "the responsibility for learning [is to be] shared among employers, individuals, suppliers and Government" (1996, p4). Moreover, as Nick Stuart argues, the case for Lifelong Learning is important for "economic, cultural and social reasons", but the initiatives supported by government action all underpinned the economic agenda and both culture and society were quietly forgotten about. In addition, neither the DfEE's document nor Nick Stuart's speech had a word to say about possible barriers to learning, whether they

Figure 1
A National Strategy for Lifelong Learning



be personal, material, social, cultural or structural. The blind spot in the previous administration's vision of partnership has also been mentioned previously.

Enough of criticism, it is time to build. Figure 1 attempts to provide the reader with an overview of ten elements thought more likely to contribute to constructing and sustaining a national strategy. No ingredient is self-contained but is meant to intersect and overlap with all the others and the whole must *interact productively*. The main lesson I draw from Paolo Trivellato's article on Japan (in this volume) is that "The smooth and efficient performance of a learning society depends heavily on interconnectedness and interrelatedness" among all the key factors. Each of the ten elements will now be briefly described in turn, pride of place being given to the distinctive leadership role of government in developing a new vision for this country and providing the financial means of realising it.

1. ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

A growing consensus is clearly visible in reports from both employers' and trade unions' organizations to the effect that creating economic prosperity, social cohesion and a vibrant culture are not competing but complementary goals. Economic arguments about international competitiveness, the liberal concern for personal freedom, and the democratic case for social justice, active citizenship and quality of life are beginning to converge because of the growing awareness that a socially divided or authoritarian society is highly unlikely to remain economically successful in the long term. In the words of the TEC National Council, the aim must be to achieve "a dynamic equilibrium between wealth creation and social cohesion, between competitiveness and social inclusion" (1997, Foreword).

In more detail, the UK needs to be released from the trap of what David Finegold and David Soskice called "the low skills equilibrium, in which the majority of enterprises staffed by poorly trained managers and workers produce low-quality goods and services" (1991, p215). Elsewhere[6] I have detailed the institutional and political conditions necessary for the British economy to convert to high value-added production. For the sake of brevity, this will hereon be called "the high skills route" to economic prosperity, social cohesion and a vibrant culture, following the terminology of David Ashton and Francis Green (1996). They propose *a central role for the state* in co-ordinating policies on education and training with policies on trade and industry, priority being given to the latter. Drawing on studies of the newly industrialised economies (NIEs) of Hong Kong, South Korea, Taiwan and especially Singapore, Ashton and Green argue that "the NIEs have succeeded in forging a new role for the government, as 'guardian' of the long-term interest of the community" (1996, p181). To prevent any misunderstanding, it is emphasized that the aim is to *co-ordinate* education and employment policies and not to *sub-ordinate* the former to the latter. If equilibrium is to be achieved by deepening democracy and strengthening social cohesion as well as creating prosperity, then education values cannot be surrendered to the amorality of the market and must be incorporated into a curriculum based on knowledge and citizenship.

Such a change would constitute a major break with practice inherited from previous Conservative governments, whereby employers exercised a monopoly in determining the nation's short term training needs. And yet it is clear that, after twenty years, the

policy of voluntarism with regard to industrial training has failed. The alternative is not to re-introduce a levy, instead tax incentives and concessions should be offered to firms *not* just to provide training for their employees, but to upgrade their production strategies in favour of high value goods and services.

Developing an appropriate vision and securing consensus for it will constitute the positive and agreeable side of the politician's task. The other side of the coin will be advocating, and securing, the funds necessary to turn the vision into a reality. A new culture of Lifelong Learning will not be brought to life in this country without major, additional financial support from the state, even if the other partners (employers and individuals) are persuaded to pay a greater share of the costs.

The third role for government is to animate, manage, monitor and constantly improve the performance of the whole strategy and of its constituent parts.

2. PRINCIPLES

A new policy also needs to be underpinned by a set of principles which outline the values which give purpose and life to the strategy and which are also used as criteria for evaluating progress. The following are suggested as initial formulations:

- *Lifelong Learning is an inclusive concept*. Some accounts of Lifelong Learning define it as the provision of all forms of *post-compulsory* education and training. That interpretation is rejected in favour of an inclusive approach which sees Lifelong Learning as the concern of all, of those aged nothing to ninety. The remit of Lifelong Learning is therefore not post 21 nor post 18 nor post 16, but *post partum*. Different interpretations of Lifelong Learning must not descend into a squabble about which age group is more worthy of funding, with the claims of 16 to 25 year olds being pushed by one set of professionals against the interest of "third agers" i.e. those in retirement. If a strategy for Lifelong Learning is to be widely supported and to mean spreading opportunities more evenly over the lifecourse and between different groups, it needs to embrace *all* age groups and *all* sections of the population and not just those experiencing difficult transitions from school to work or those in full-time employment whose skills need updating. With an increasingly ageing population and the growth of part-time, temporary and casual jobs, the rationale for Lifelong Learning must move beyond a proper concern for social justice and social cohesion to include the quality of life, health and well-being of all citizens. Having said that, resources will always be finite and priorities will have to be made.

- *a culture of Lifelong Learning must be based on equity and social justice*. The words are easy to write but there are formidable structural barriers which favour inequity and injustice. To give one example, in George Walden's words, the UK has an apartheid educational system, one country with "two systems and two sectors in the service of two different educational nations" (1996, p49). The segregation and consequent separate development are seriously dysfunctional because a prosperous, just and cohesive modern democracy requires an active citizenry, *all* of whom are well educated and appropriately trained throughout their lives and *not* a separately educated elite and an expendable army of casual, temporary or part-time workers.

The new Labour government has made a good start on this problem by phasing out the Assisted Places scheme and it could continue by ending the fiscal privileges of the private schools, as Ian Corfield (1997) has recently argued. But these measures, welcome in themselves, will not heal the deep divide and some new thinking such as George Walden's Open Sector (whereby private schools would be encouraged financially to join voluntarily a new third sector of education) needs to be more widely debated.

- *a very broad definition of learning needs to be adopted.* Malcolm Maguire, in his article in this collection, draws the conclusion from research into employee development schemes that "participation in activities such as fitness training, ballroom dancing and music lessons can have a significant impact on subsequent susceptibility to learning". In other words, the hook which, it is alleged, catches the interest of those who have remained aloof from any form of learning since leaving school often turns out to be their hobby (e.g. sport) and by this means some adults have become learners again. Such research claims to have established a virtuous and motivating link between non-vocational learning and vocational training, but whether that link is sufficiently strong to nourish, consistently, learning throughout the lifespan and to overcome structural barriers remains to be demonstrated. Learning here refers to "significant changes in capability or understanding", a point made in the section on the third fallacy above. Improving the skills of the workforce is not the only goal of Lifelong Learning and a genuine culture of Lifelong Learning will include general education, education for living and for active citizenship as well as vocational training, as Veronica McGivney rightly argues in Chapter 7. A very broad definition of the *institutions* which provide Lifelong Learning will also be needed as many voluntary organizations provide adult education and training for their employees. An example is the TUC's Bargaining for Skills Unit, whose primary aim is to increase trade union involvement in workplace training.

- *all of us are capable of continuous improvement.* We are in need of a more generous conception of human ability which recognises that there are at least seven different ways of knowing the world, what Howard Gardner has termed "the seven human intelligences" (1993, p12) and that we can be continually improving whatever forms of knowing we are most comfortable with. Those who have worked with "status zero" young people (i.e. those who are neither in education nor in training nor in employment) regularly report that the considerable knowledge, skills and understandings which they *do* possess have neither been recognised formally nor tapped and developed (see Wilkinson, 1995; Instance, Rees and Williamson, 1994). Such young people still need high quality opportunities to which they can respond but they do not exist yet (see section 7 below for proposals).

- *lifelong learning should provide continuous chances for everyone, at all stages of their lives and whatever their circumstances.* The EU White Paper on promoting the Learning Society advocates the provision of "second chance schools" for those who have failed their first chance. Instead of providing just a second chance and that only to young people, the system of Lifelong Learning should offer recurrent opportunities to all to engage and re-engage with learning at whatever points in their life they choose. But even continuous access will not in itself be sufficient if the access is to institutions which remain fundamentally unaltered or if the individual's circumstances

(e.g. a single mother without recourse to child care) prevent advantage being taken of widening opportunities.

Some commentators have been pressing for a minimum entitlement to education to be offered to everyone. The Kennedy Report, for instance, recommends a lifetime entitlement to education up to level 3 which corresponds to A level or its equivalents (N/SVQ3, GN/SVQ3 and BTEC National Diploma). Such a proposal has not been included in the list of principles because of doubts about its appropriateness and its cost. A universal entitlement would produce a considerable amount of "deadweighting" i.e. funding of all those who would reach level 3 anyway without the need for state support. Funding will need to be targeted at those with the greatest need for education and training - the unemployed, the peripheral workforce and those with poor basic skills (see section 7 below).

3. CURRICULUM, PEDAGOGY AND ASSESSMENT

Learning to learn will need to become an essential component of the "spiral curriculum" of all learners (Bruner, 1960). Students should begin to study how to learn in infant school and, in a continuing process which leads to ever more mature levels of understanding, they should return to the same issue but in more demanding and complex ways in the primary, secondary, tertiary and adult stages of their learning careers. We are presently a long way from such a "spiral curriculum" because learning to learn is not only a missing ingredient in undergraduate education, as Malcolm Skilbeck and Helen Connell (1996) have pointed out, it is also absent from all other phases of education. A *Progress File*, of the kind advocated by the Dearing Committee[7], could be used "as a planning tool for people's personal development throughout their lives" (Dearing, 1997, p139). In an earlier report, Sir Ron Dearing argued that a reformulated National Record of Achievement (NRA) which received the support of employers has the potential to be much more than a summary of achievement:

> *It could be an important instrument through which young people develop the practice of managing and taking responsibility for their own learning, as a skill they need for life, continuing through college, university and into work (1996, p15).*

The aim is to create greater *continuity* between primary, secondary, tertiary and continuing education and learning undertaken in the workplace, home or community. A restructured NRA in the form of the *Progress File* could provide a much needed spine to link together different phases and types of learning over a lifetime and to convince students of the potentially bracing impact of assessment on their learning. Patricia Broadfoot has, however, raised the pertinent question: "Will *Progress File* succeed where Records of Achievement failed ... to challenge the established orthodoxies of teaching and learning?" (1997, p2). For it to succeed, *Progress File* will need to become a reflective account of the student's engagements with learning, as well as being supported by employers and by much higher levels of resources and training than the paltry sum allocated so far. A deeper level of difficulty concerns the incompatibility of *Progress File* with the more traditional forms of assessment backing the National Curriculum.

Candy *et al* have listed what they consider to be the essential characteristics of the Lifelong Learner: an inquiring mind, 'helicopter vision' (sensing the interconnectedness of different fields of study), information literacy, a sense of personal agency and a repertoire of learning skills (quoted by Skilbeck and Connell, 1996). These rather individualistic abilities need a more social dimension to be added to them, namely, understanding the social relationships and arrangements which stimulate learning and knowing how to develop the learning of others.

A strategy for Lifelong Learning will also have to pay explicit attention to the concept of learning and a Learning Society will require tutors and trainers who use a sophisticated social theory of learning to evaluate their practice and who are proficient in improving the quality of their students' learning. The Dearing Committee has recommended the creation of an Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (1997, p125), but such an organization is needed for all other sectors to deepen our understanding of different kinds of learning: to restrict it to research into HE would be to betray the interests of Lifelong Learning.

If, as Harold Gardner argues, human beings learn in a wide variety of ways, then their different styles of learning

> *challenge an educational system that assumes that everyone can learn the same materials in the same way and that a uniform, universal measure suffices to test student learning. Indeed, as currently constituted, our educational system is heavily biased toward linguistic modes of instruction and assessment and, to a somewhat lesser extent, toward logical-quantitative modes as well (Gardner, 1993, p12).*

The most far-reaching changes in pedagogy and forms of assessment will need to be introduced to respond to the needs of those most in need of Lifelong Learning, i.e. those whom traditional teaching methods have failed, those with low self-esteem who are also unused to working in groups, who are computer illiterate or unaware of their preferred learning style, or who camouflage their lack of self-confidence in a professed lack of interest in learning. Tom Healy, in the second chapter in this report, quotes research into adult literacy which showed that "a majority of adults even with the lowest levels of literacy did not consider that reading skills limited their job opportunities at all". Such a lack of understanding is matched both by those tutors and trainers who do not realise that a didactic pedagogy is ineffective with many non-traditional students and by those who oversell information technology as a panacea for the non-motivated (see section 10 below).

A national strategy of Lifelong Learning will also need to construct well signposted routes into and through the current jungle of post 14 qualifications, frameworks and systems, which are not signposts to *segregated* tracks. The Dearing Report on Higher Education (1997) has usefully recommended a national framework of qualifications at eight levels and a national system of credit accumulation and transfer (CAT). Different models, however, of what the new system would look like are currently being advocated. David Raffe, for instance, offers "a single progression ladder which all students may climb even if they start at different points, rather than [directing] students to climb separate ladders" (1997, p191). This metaphor caters for diversification within a unified system but the single ladder is likely to become so congested that David Robertson's metaphor for a unified qualifications/credit framework which links

further and higher education - the climbing frame - is here preferred to images of ladders and bridges "because it evokes multi-directional and multi-dimensional mobility" (Robertson and Hillman, 1997, p65). The prospect of creating a credit culture, however, "remains heavily circumscribed by traditions, regulations and the absence of a culture of mobility and choice" (Robertson, 1994, p86).

A lifelong and independent guidance service will also be needed to enable individuals of all ages to plan and enhance their learning by providing them with the skills to use *Progress File* throughout life, with an understanding of the structural inequalities and power relations which affect their options, and with the political will to act as they see fit. Teresa Rees, Will Bartlett and Tony Watts discuss such issues in Chapter 9 of this volume.

4. THE CHANGING CONTEXTS OF LIFELONG LEARNING

Educational institutions in the UK have been characteristically slow in coming to terms with the fact that the contexts in which learning takes place have become more varied, popular and significant. Educational managers need to be aware that, to powerful players like the TEC National Council, they are thought to be "part of the problem rather than part of the solution" (1997, p29), because their institutions "are insufficiently flexible, responsive or innovative, for the needs of a Lifelong Learning society" (1997, p33).

For Lynne Chisholm (see Chapter 1), what is at stake is "our collective capacity to recast existing organizational forms in ways that both facilitate and motivate" Lifelong Learning for everyone. She argues that, "this implies less institutional organizations - whether in the educational, business or public administrative worlds - that operate more like networks than like systems".

I would push Lynne's arguments further still. Where she calls for individual and institutional change to go hand-in-hand, I would argue that individual, institutional and *structural* change should be introduced simultaneously. Better still, institutional and structural change should in fact come first to create more welcoming environments for individuals hesitant about beginning to learn again and to show that government and institutional leaders are serious about radical change. Where Lynne and I are in agreement is that the main burden of change should not be placed on individuals when, for instance, the structures and processes of our educational institutions continue to fail so many people.

Universities have for some time lost their monopoly in the creation of new knowledge, but an heroic role awaits them of *leading* the movement into a Learning Society, if only they can seize the initiative and begin developing a coherent strategy for human resource development in the regions (see point 5 below). It is not necessary, however, to implement the TEC National Council's implacable suggestion (1997, p19) of moving to twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week trading, and, no doubt, fifty-two weeks a year to make our learning institutions more of a community resource for Lifelong Learning. But if no such changes are made and made quickly, then more radical measures, which are already attracting considerable support, may well be tried. For instance, Bamford Taggs is developing a sophisticated model of "individual

lifetime learning accounts", the main objective of which is to move public funding of learning from institutions to individuals (see the consultation paper by Jim Smith and Andrea Spurling, 1997). The government has already launched a million Individual Learning Accounts so the principle could easily be extended. The TEC National Council also favours widending access to public funding of Further and Higher Education beyond the existing institutions to private firms (1997, p29). Such measures, which are meant to "break the stranglehold of monopoly producers", come with their own technical, administrative and financial drawbacks, but even if these are resolved they may de-stabilise existing systems without enfranchising the disaffected.

A national system of learning at work has been identified as an essential component of the "high skills route" by those who have studied skill formation in newly industrialised economies (e.g. Ashton and Green, 1996). By integrating practical on-the-job skills with the learning of theory, governments have provided grants to enhance directly the learning of adult workers in order to develop the productive system. According to Paolo Trivellato (in Chapter 11), work based learning is so much part and parcel of being an industrial worker in Japan as opposed to an optional extra in the West that "on the job *training*" would be better renamed "on the job *learning*". In the UK empirical studies of employee development schemes have demonstrated substantial benefits for both management and workers and a common interest in developing a system for accrediting workplace learning (see Forrester, Payne and Ward, 1995), a successful model of which appears to have been developed at Leeds University (see Elizabeth Foster, 1996). John Payne has summarised the strengths and weaknesses of employee development schemes which are clearly involving some employees in education for the first time since leaving school, but obviously do not affect those excluded from the labour market: they are able "to transform the lives of individual workers or even individual workplaces", but are unable to "transform social and economic structures which sustain and legitimate inequalities of opportunity and outcome" (1995, p230). These encouraging but piecemeal British initiatives need to be built into a national, institutionalised means of deepening the skills of all workers.

One of the outstanding successes of the European Year of Lifelong Learning has been the promotion of imaginative, informal learning opportunities such as Inn-Tuition, a "programme of pub-based learning modules, initiated by a Leeds further education college in conjunction with a regional brewery" (Chisholm, Chapter 1). For most of us, some of the most important lessons in life (e.g. concerning sex, alcohol and the hidden curriculum of institutions) have been learned informally and such informal learning in families and communities is likely to grow in significance as people come to depend more on their social networks to cope with the increasing insecurities of the labour market. For instance, people of my generation in their fifties are likely to be taught more about their personal computers by their own children in a process called "reverse socialisation" by Lynne Chisholm (see Chapter 1) than by formal staff development sessions at their place of work. What is needed now is independent evaluation of what is being learned and by whom in such projects as Inn-tuition.

Flexible, accessible and responsive educational institutions will continue to be central to a strategy for Lifelong Learning, but the contexts in which significant learning takes place have already extended to the workplace, the home and local community centres. New methods are also being found to take learning to where the non-traditional

learners are rather than expecting them to take that first, difficult step. For example, the University of Sunderland and Gateshead College of Further Education have set up Learning World in the Metro Centre which is the largest shopping complex in Europe. The University for Industry is seeking to establish a series of such centres in settings such as Sunderland Football Club's new stadium and these approaches to widening access deserve financial support (see Hillman, 1996).

5. REGIONAL COLLABORATION

A national strategy needs to decide upon *the* most appropriate level for managing change, even if other policies at the micro level (individual), the meso level (organization) and the macro level (society) are all in place and interacting productively. Exciting initiatives on Lifelong Learning are being promoted in the UK at all of the following levels: the individual, the learning organization, the learning community, the learning town (e.g. Retford and Thetford) and the learning city (e.g. Liverpool, Edinburgh etc.), the learning county (Kent)[8] and the learning region. The upshot is much unco-ordinated activity, wasteful competition, fragmentation, confusion and duplication of effort. The region has been chosen as the optimal level for implementing policy for the following reasons:

- the learning or "knowledge creating" region is replacing "the nation state as the centrepiece of economic activity" in the global market (Richard Florida, 1996, p17). It is the ability of firms to learn, to upgrade their knowledge and production, and to innovate which has become critical "and that innovative capacity stems from interactions within spatially embedded industrial systems" (Hallin and Malmberg, 1996, p332). Each region, then, needs to create as innovative a milieu as possible by first auditing its physical, financial, social, cultural and human capital (and not only the latter), and then by systematically improving the interactions between them.

- decision-making is now regionally based in nearly all the member states of the European Union, both large and small, and the UK is so far the major exception to that rule. Moreover, the EU operates with a model of a "Europe of the regions" in implementing its programmes. The Committee of the Regions has also proved to be a valuable addition to the institutions of the European Community as it is increasingly recognised that effective policy formulation and action needs the direct participation of regional levels of government.

- the Labour government is establishing Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) whose remit needs to be extended from co-ordinating economic development to achieving the dynamic equilibrium between wealth creation and social cohesion, discussed earlier (in section 1, above). What must be avoided at all costs is the separate development of two sets of plans by RDAs - a framework for competitiveness and a strategy for human resource development. Instead, government representatives on the new agencies need to ensure that the *strategy for Lifelong Learning is integrated with policies on trade and industry*. The RDAs will also be ideally placed to insist upon a high level of collaboration among local players, many of whom (e.g. local authorities, private industry, universities and the voluntary sector) are accustomed to a high level of institutional autonomy.

- RDAs could, for example, implement one of the main recommendations of the Kennedy Report on Further Education, namely to establish a Learning Regeneration Fund:

> *the fund would draw together pockets of money from the Department of Trade and Industry, the Department for Education and Employment, the Single Regeneration Budget, the Funding Councils for Further and Higher Education, European regeneration money and private sector contributions (1997, p11).*

- The Dearing Report on Higher Education concluded that the extent of involvement by universities in their localities and regions "is currently patchy" (apparently, a quarter of institutions do not refer to regional objectives in their strategic plans), "but that it needs to turn to active and systematic engagement" (1997, p190). Universities are ideally placed to link the global and the local by disseminating new knowledge from research, but what faces them at present is "a patchwork quilt of idiosyncrasy and complexity ... our experience tells us that co-ordinating public policies without the lubricating effect of additional funding is an almost impossible task" (John Goddard *et al*, 1994, p55).

- The decisive strides which have been taken towards devolution in Scotland and to a lesser extent in Wales should also in time result in some decentralisation of political and economic power to the English regions and local communities. For instance, the consultations about the remit of the RDAs and about a national strategy for Lifelong Learning must involve those who will be at the receiving end of these new policies (i.e. the so-called "beneficiaries" who should be participants in the process of change), and not just representatives of intermediate institutions and organizations. In such a way we could enlist in the cause of Lifelong Learning a large but as yet untapped resource: the talent, experience and goodwill of people of the third and fourth age.

6. REGULATION AND EVALUATION

The research literature speaks with a consistent voice on this issue: "low to medium regulation (guidelines more than prescriptions), combined with high engagement (negotiation, technical assistance, monitoring, feedback, problem solving) works better [than] high regulation and high monitoring [which] can achieve minimal compliance at best" (Michael Fullan, 1991, p270). All major innovations run into difficulties and often provoke a backlash as soon as they first hit problems (see John Nisbet, 1975) or they are discredited by being implemented too quickly (see Paul Black, 1995). Challenges will be more effectively countered if regulation, accountability and monitoring have been institutionalized from the beginning in order to:

- provide qualitative and quantitative evidence on both processes and outcomes

- "over-ride the free market's inherent bias towards short-termism" (Ashton and Green, 1996, p102) and to develop a long term commitment to Lifelong Learning

- widen access to innovative practices by disseminating success stories

- expose "new ideas to scrutiny, helping to weed out mistakes and further develop promising practices" (Michael Fullan, 1991, p86)

- and, above all, to create a system of inspection which does not rely on fear and the abuse of power to encourage professionals to continue learning.

Teresa Rees, Will Bartlett and Tony Watts helpfully identify in Chapter 9 four general criteria for measuring the success of welfare reforms: efficiency, quality (or responsiveness), choice and equity. If these criteria were to be added to the principles listed in section 2 above (and the overlap excised), they could be used to argue for the removal of unjustifiable inequalities and to evaluate the strategy for Lifelong Learning.

Strong criticism was also made during the Newcastle conference of one of the government's monitoring devices - the National Targets for Education and Training. First, it was admitted that these were "catch-up" rather than world-beating targets and we were still failing to reach them. Second, the targets are restricted to the workforce and so

> *exclude the unregistered unemployed, those whose work is casual and intermittent, and women who have left the labour market for family reasons, although women are expected to provide over 80 per cent of labour market entrants and re-entrants in the foreseeable future. There are no targets for people with literacy problems (estimated at one in six of the adult population) and none for traditionally non participating groups (Veronica McGivney, Chapter 7).*

To promote Lifelong Learning, it will also be necessary to develop some more sophisticated and equitable performance indicators than those currently in operation. The percentage of students leaving school without any GCSEs could, for instance, become an indicator of school quality as well as concentrating on those who achieve five or more GCSEs. And the attitude to Lifelong Learning could be assessed by including the following question in all formal evaluations: has this course encouraged you to go on learning? Paolo Trivellato in his chapter also reveals that the two main indicators in the West of training activity (the average spent per worker and the average number of days per worker) are unavailable in Japan. Perhaps UK firms need to record in their annual reports not only estimates of the money and time invested in training but also what is more important:

> *some indication of what has been learned. Moreover the EC usefully recommend that the resourcing and evaluation of educational institutions should be better balanced, so that excellence in working with those needing most support and encouragement is recognised to be as valuable as achieving good examination results (EC, 1997, p48).*

7. DISMANTLING STRUCTURAL BARRIERS

So much innovation is currently being demanded of individuals and institutions that some corresponding requirement should be made of government in respect of structural change. A unit could be established to dismantle structural barriers to the creation of a culture of Lifelong Learning for all, otherwise this element of the national strategy will be neglected in favour of easier targets. John Kenneth Galbraith has

argued that what has to be tackled is the tolerance of sharpening differences in inequality shown by the contented who favour inaction in the hope that "the long run may never come" (1992, p173). The creation of yet another unit in addition to the newly formed Social Exclusion Unit and the Standards and Effectiveness Unit will be questioned both by those who have no stomach for radical change and by those who appreciate how deeply rooted the problems are e.g. the historical devaluing of vocational education.

Structural change of the kind envisaged requires a mandate so what follows are suggestions which would need to be widely canvassed for support. Others with different expertise, interests and values will no doubt make different recommendations, concerning perhaps the class structure or the labour market or the prevailing political culture, and the relative merits and opportunity costs of each proposal will need to be determined.

A start could be made by rescinding those aspects of current policy inherited from the past which militate against the interests of a Lifelong Learning culture. Examples are not hard to find: the 16 hour rule which controls the amount of time which the unemployed can devote to study, the indefensible differential in the funding of part-time and full-time students, output related funding which encourages "cream skimming" (i.e. a concentration on those most likely to obtain the qualification) and the remorseless drive in all sectors of education and training to demand more for less.

Second, as the system of education and training continues to generate a learning underclass despite (and in part because of) energetic attempts to raise educational standards as set out in the Labour Government's White Paper, *Excellence in Schools*, it will become clearer that the main task is to restructure the mainstream rather than continually to plead for extra help to be extended to the casualties, (see EC, 1997, p52). For example, the separate development of the private and maintained sectors needs to be addressed, as discussed in section 2 above. The English obsession with class may yet prove to be the biggest obstacle to the creation of an open, Learning Society. Take, for instance, the evidence presented recently by Major Eric Joyce that in the British armed forces "just over 50 per cent of our annual officer intake comes from the 7 per cent of people educated in the private sector" (1997).

The time may also be ripe for the English system to take the next big step towards a *unified* qualifications system not just to reform the education and training of 14-19 year olds, but to create a culture of high aspiration, high achievement and Lifelong Learning for all, whatever their age. The three distinctive tracks (A level, GNVQ and NVQ) recommended by the Dearing review (1996) both reflect and reinforce inequitable and inefficient class divisions. The challenge of Lifelong Learning is to provide a greater breadth of learning than is currently being delivered by the three tracks and to raise the status of vocational education. As Ann Hodgson and Ken Spours put it: "academic learning needs to be more applied and vocational learning needs greater theoretical content to be able to develop both conceptual and technical capability in [all] students" (1997, p18).

Michael Young has seen that the pre-occupation with qualifications as a means of selection must give way to redesigning qualifications "to encourage learning

relationships throughout life" (1997, p36). A post 14 credit accumulation and transfer (CAT) system could be created to allow more motivating combinations of academic study, applied courses and work-based learning. The building blocks of the new CAT system would be modules and units of achievement (see Geoff Stanton, 1997), but the structural barrier of regarding A levels as a "gold standard" which cannot be improved upon will first have to be removed. And a central module on "learning to learn", available at entry, foundation, intermediate and advanced levels and based on social theories of learning, could provide the principle of unification for the unified curriculum rather than either core skills or general education (see Andy Green, 1997).

A vital part of the structural reform that is necessary is the establishment of a high quality, work-based learning route for those who at the age of sixteen want a job. A group of researchers has recently launched a set of proposals which would entitle such young people to two years traineeship, incorporating academic, vocational and practical elements (see Karen Evans *et al*, 1997). A significant feature of the detailed proposals is that no employer would be permitted to employ a young person aged under 18 years without providing at least two days training per week. Such a scheme, which recognises that "the workplace can be a creative and motivating site for learning" (ibid, p20), will be essential to provide the foundation for Lifelong Learning for young people in employment.

Government determination to tackle structural disadvantage could also be demonstrated by expanding provision for those who benefited least from initial education. John Bynner and Samantha Parsons recently presented powerful research evidence about the increasing marginalisation of a sub-group in society: those with poor basic skills (1997). As they reach "the heart of adult life" around 37 years of age, adults with low skills in literacy and numeracy had experienced longer periods of unemployment, more low level jobs and less training, poorer physical and mental health and had more children at an earlier age than their contemporaries with good skills - and yet only 18 per cent of those reporting literacy problems had attended remedial classes since leaving school. In other words, their low basic skills impose significant economic and social costs upon themselves and upon society as a whole. Malcolm Maguire in Chapter 8 quotes estimates that "the cost of poor basic skills to UK industry [alone] is more than £4.8 billion per year". John Bynner's research also points to an increasing polarization between those "getting on", those "getting by" and those "getting nowhere", the third group having "neither the personal resources nor skills to even get into the game" (Bynner, Ferri and Shephard, 1997, p2).

A political decision will have to be made about the competing claims of those with poor basic skills and of other groups in society in urgent need of education and retraining: for instance, the unemployed and the peripheral workforce (see Keep and Mayhew, 1995). The new Labour government's Welfare to Work Programme may make serious inroads into these problems, provided it encourages Lifelong Learning and does not lead to dead-end jobs without training or prospects, as in the past. The unit on dismantling structural barriers will not be closed down for lack of work to do.

8. FUNDING

This is not the place for a detailed discussion of particular funding options, but of general principles to guide the national strategy. A rule of thumb can be helpful here: if you want to understand the values of an organization or a government, follow its distribution of funds. In Chapter 5, for instance, John Field demonstrates that the share of the EU's total annual budget which is devoted to education and training amounts to less than half a percent: in 1994 it represented 0.43 per cent compared with just over 49 per cent consumed by the Common Agricultural Policy.

The Labour government will be judged by the amount of new resources found to support the new responsibilities it places on institutions, employers and individuals. It is also incumbent on government to pay for whatever structural change it introduces, for those who are unable to support their own learning financially and to correct market failures (e.g. SMEs which do not train their own workers).

The Kennedy Report on Further Education also powerfully argues that "the inequity of the current [funding] arrangements is the most compelling reason for change [and so] the overwhelming national priority should be the creation of an equitable funding system" (1997, pp50-51). In particular, the discrimination in funding must end between "deserving" (generally younger, academic, full-time and better qualified) and "undeserving" learners (often older, vocationally-focused, part-time and poorly qualified). The Dearing Report on Higher Education has responded by arguing that, because "about 35 per cent of part-time students have their fees paid for them by their employers", change should be restricted to allowing institutions to remit the tuition fees for those part-time students in receipt of social security (1997, pp275-6). But the Report is silent on whether it supports pressure being applied to employers to pay the fees of the other 65 per cent of part-time students and on whether the government should pick up all or part of the cost of the fees of those who receive no such help.

More welcome is the Dearing recommendation to give priority, when funding expansion of HE, "to those institutions which can demonstrate a commitment to widening participation, and have in place a participation strategy, a mechanism for monitoring progress, and provision for review" (ibid, p107). Widening participation should become *the* criterion for additional funding to any provider of Lifelong Learning, e.g. those who enrol students from disadvantaged localities, as identified by home postcodes.

The Kennedy Report is also right to claim that "funding is the most important lever for change" (1997, p43). The management of change has shown that educational institutions are particularly sensitive to financial incentives. Relatively small amounts of money can create disproportionate effects so the financial levers should be firmly pulled by Ministers to ensure more broadly based participation. Conversely, the funding of many institutions is so precarious that a sudden change in the funding methodology transforms concern over widening participation into a struggle for jobs and institutional survival. In other words, *short term* funding is seriously inappropriate for the *long term* task of changing a whole culture in favour of Lifelong Learning. An independent evaluation of Lifelong Learning strategies by TECs concluded that:

The constant bidding for development funding and various pilots did not help to embed the concept [of Lifelong Learning]. Indeed, some argued that only once a budget stream for Lifetime Learning was established would the concept be fully taken seriously within TECs (Dench, Hillage and Maginn, 1997, p52).

Finally, it was the considered judgment of the practitioners at the conference that the costs of widening participation were considerable but that the long term benefits to individuals, families, communities and society were out of all proportion to the original investment.

9. A MODEL OF CHANGE

A Learning Society worthy of the name would, amongst other qualities, show a proper respect for evidence and learn from its own mistakes. There are lessons to be learned from the unprecedented turmoil created in education by the radical reforms introduced by successive Conservative governments, particularly the National Curriculum backed by assessment. According to Paul Black, who was at the centre of these reforms from the beginning as chair of the Task Group on Assessment and Testing, "in the management of educational change, our national approach has been clumsy to the point of incompetence" (1995, p8). It is also a reasonable inference from Duncan Graham's (1993) account of the establishment of the National Curriculum that the politicians, policy-makers and professionals were all operating *without* an explicit model of change. The cost to the tax-payer, never mind the teachers, was enormous: "the official estimate of the National Curriculum that has been ditched was at the end of 1993 (excluding the tests) put at £469,000,000" (David Hargreaves, 1994, p47).

Those responsible for the introduction of a *National Strategy for Lifelong Learning* should be armed with a sophisticated knowledge of the dynamics of change, which can be derived from the empirical research and theories of, for example, Michael Fullan (1991), David Hargreaves and David Hopkins (1991) and David Hargreaves (1994 and 1997). The CBI has appreciated, for example, that the quality of learning "largely depends on those who provide it: from nursery teachers to vice-chancellors, from college lecturers to line managers" (1995, p21). As we know to our cost, teachers have felt that their professionalism has been demeaned because they have been restricted to the technical role of implementing the reforms of others. But even if the changes had been instigated by the teachers themselves, Michael Fullan has rightly emphasized that "the difficulty of learning new skills and behaviour and unlearning old ones is vastly underestimated" (1991, p129). This time we must not be taken in by the illusion that, once a policy has been formulated and passed into law then "implementation will proceed on autopilot" (Hargreaves and Hopkins, 1991, p9). This time we must involve those who are to implement the changes in the decisions about content and process so that they are more likely to make the reforms their own and constantly refine them.

10. A LEARNING CULTURE

In 1993-94 the OECD studied the general public's respect for secondary teachers in eleven countries and claimed that "this indicator translates into support or lack of support for the teaching profession. How people perceive the profession is likely to

affect recruitment and the quality of new entrants" (1995, p59). The UK fell below the average rating and only in Sweden and Spain was respect for the teaching profession lower. To this should be added a sustained campaign of "teacher bashing" by the tabloid press in the UK, the "discourse of derision" directed at the profession by supporters of the New Right and the policies of successive Conservative governments (e.g. National Testing) which revealed a profound distrust of teachers (see Stephen Ball, 1990).

The contrast with Japan is very marked, as Paolo Trivellato explains in detail in Chapter 11, while also acknowledging shortcomings in the Japanese system such as the high levels of stress caused by the intense competition for places at elite schools and universities. Both the teaching profession and education in general are more highly regarded in Japan, where the school system develops high levels of attainment and positive attitudes towards learning among almost the whole age cohort of students, who go on to learn in a wide variety of contexts after school. At the same time, Japanese industry and society support the same values as those fostered by teachers and build upon them by, for example, rewarding the acquisition of workplace skills. In short, initial education until the age of 18 provides a firm basis for the next phase of Lifelong Learning, which in turn has a beneficial backwash effect upon the schools. In these ways the learning of individuals is transformed into the learning of whole age groups, communities and organizations - into a Learning Society in fact.

Veronica McGivney (in Chapter 7) deepens the contrast between the two countries by referring to the anti-intellectual culture of the UK "as demonstrated by the depressing regularity with which politicians and the press snipe regularly at teachers, academics, intellectuals and 'trendy' student-centred approaches". That anti-intellectual culture also affects our schools and colleges where clever students are at times reduced to disguising or downplaying their abilities to prevent being picked on. The destruction of the self-confidence and self-esteem of many students by compulsory schooling has also resulted, according to some researchers (e.g. Edwards *et al*, 1993) in cultures of non-participation and at times open hostility to education and training. In a Lifelong Learning culture, "the phrase 'the eternal student' [would] never again be a term of abuse" (Tessa Blackstone, 1996, p25).

There are, however, countervailing sources of hope. The establishment of a General Teaching Council will do much to raise the status of the teaching profession, provided that the DfEE reverses its current order of priorities and makes the continuing professional development of all the good teachers in the system the foremost task of the new Council and not standards of conduct, coping with "grossly incompetent teachers" and "sharpening up" appraisal, as in its consultation document (DfEE, 1997). Competent staff are unlikely to be inspired to ever higher levels of commitment by first being shown the instruments of torture being slowly warmed for the incompetent.

The success of employee development schemes has been so widespread and so welcomed by both sides of industry that it casts doubt upon any cultural explanation of non-participation, as Malcolm Maguire argues in Chapter 9. The vigorous interest shown by employers and employees in work-based learning has led to new relationships with local universities, "the development of Lifelong Learning skills and the promotion of economic and social regeneration" (Elizabeth Foster, 1996, p10).

The potential of the mass media and of the new technologies (IT) to influence established patterns of non-participation are only beginning to be realised. For instance, the National Institute for Adult and Continuing Education has had considerable success during its annual Adult Learners Week in using sports and media personalities as role models in short, comic TV programmes. A national telephone helpline is to be made available to all throughout the UK in 1998 (although non-traditional learners and those without 'phones are unlikely to use the new facility), and access to guidance as well as information is an obvious extension of this proposal. One TV channel should be ear-marked for education and training in the UK, as Naomi Sargant has suggested (1997).

The University for Industry seeks to develop "a national learning network" which would not only exploit IT but would also co-ordinate and extend learning opportunities to workplaces, homes and local learning centres by providing learning on demand i.e. "the learning that people want, at the time and in the place that best suits their needs" (Hillman, 1996, p24). The potential for misunderstanding is, however, high when the University for Industry is "neither a University nor for industry" as Nick Stuart has put it (1997). This welcome initiative badly needs a change of title as it will neither award degrees nor offer courses, but rather co-ordinate existing facilities into a "national learning grid" (a possible title?) for all kinds of learners and not just companies.

A healthy scepticism is required, however, to counter the almost evangelical faith of those who believe in the power of IT to transform the quality of students' learning. It seems obvious that techniques such as distance learning, electronic mail and video-conferencing should be an essential component of a strategy of Lifelong Learning and it would be absurd to deny the benefits, particularly for remote, rural communities. But these powerful new technologies are in the main producing tools for isolated learners and in apparent ignorance of the central place of socially shared knowledge and of collaborative relationships in effective learning. Charles Crook has shown how a collaborative culture of learning could be developed in relation to this technology and so avoid the fate of previous innovations such as computer-assisted instruction which was heralded as an "educational heart transplant" (1994, p3).

In the meantime, independent evaluation will need to examine critically the unrestrained claim that "Television and computer technology together have the power to revolutionize learning for the twenty first Century" (Kennedy Report, 1997, p108). For example, *whose* learning is likely to be so transformed? IT is creating a new form of inequality in that technologies like the Internet are concentrated in the hands of an elite (only 6.9 per cent "have access to the 'Net' and this is mainly at work" Sargant, 1997, p21), producing "technological haves" and "computer illiterate have-nots". Nor is the research evidence on attitudes to IT encouraging. The ESRC's *16-19 Initiative*, which studied young people in four contrasting areas of Britain, showed that those least interested in IT were those who left school at 16 to enter a dead-end job or those who became unemployed: "Poor educational attainment, strong work commitment, dislike of new technology and of training are all interrelated" (Michael Banks *et al*, 1992, p47). A further problem remains because IT also mounts a considerable challenge to "dominant cultural beliefs about what teaching, learning and proper

knowledge are and how schools are organised for instruction" (Larry Cuban, 1993, p206).

Anthony Giddens writes engagingly about "the many points of political engagement which offer good cause for optimism"; in particular, he points to the expansion in contemporary societies of "social reflexivity" and its impact on industry, bureaucracy and politics (1994, p21). Social reflexivity, he argues, is largely responsible for the growth in industry of flexible production, of bottom-up decision making and of the slow disappearance of old bureaucratic systems, those "dinosaurs of the post-industrial age" (1994, p7). Similarly, "in the domain of politics, states can no longer so readily treat their citizens as subjects" (ibid). The growth in social reflexivity is also likely to increase demands for a culture of Lifelong Learning as a means of dealing with unpredictability and fragmentation and an expanding system of Lifelong Learning will in turn extend the influence of social reflexivity[9].

Another resource for a journey of hope is the high priority accorded to education by the new Labour government which will have helped to lift the morale of the teaching profession. We must, however, learn from Paolo Trivellato's *interconnected* account of Japan as a Learning Society - education cannot be detached from the other spheres which it helps to shape and is shaped by in turn - local labour markets, the family and politics, to mention only three. A national strategy for Lifelong Learning, to be successful, will require demonstrable inter-connections with all the key institutions and social forces of a modern democracy. The strategy must *not* become a single-minded crusade to improve the performance of the education and training system; instead, Lifelong Learning has to be embedded at the heart of British society in the connections between employment, education and training and the quality of life. The attempt to do so will provide new roles for government, employers, institutions and individuals. If the strategy succeeds, it will also make the UK worth living in and worth working for[10].

Notes

1. It has been estimated that "more than 20,000 jobless people quit college courses in the UK each year because of wildly differing interpretations of benefit rules" (Ward and Nash, 1996). This figure is likely to be an under-estimate because it is not possible to put a figure on those who are deterred from applying to college courses by social security regulations.

2. Mr Blunkett is quoted in *The Independent* of 21 May, 1997 as saying "Today in the learning society it is human capital that a nation will increasingly find itself investing in". At the launch of the Kennedy report on Further Education, Dr Kim Howells, the Minister for Lifelong Learning, commented : "If we do not find the means of generating the appropriate skills and crafts and expertise, then we will fail to develop our most important resource - our people - and we will fail as an economy in this increasingly globalised market" (2 July, 1997 DfEE Press Release). The first White Paper of the new Labour government, *Excellence in Schools*, also starts its second chapter by arguing "Investment in learning in the 21st Century is the equivalent of investment in the machinery and technical innovation that was essential to the first great industrial revolution. Then it was physical capital; now it is human capital" (DfEE, 1997, p15). So Rover and Nissan and Siemens have no use for physical or financial capital?

3. Tim Brighouse, Director of Education for Birmingham and joint Vice-Chairman of the Labour Government's new Standards and Effectiveness Unit, wrote in The Observer on 1 June, 1997 that our future prosperity "...depends on entrepreneurial skills and creativity - and these depend **wholly** on a highly educated, highly trained workforce" (Emphasis as in original).

4. The report was written by representatives of Europe's industrial leaders (ERT) and of Rectors of European Universities (CRE).

5. An Information Pack on the 14 projects which make up the ESRC's *The Learning Society Programme* is available from the Director, Frank Coffield, Department of Education, University of Newcastle, St Thomas' Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 7RU. (Telephone 0191 222 6397, Fax 0191 222 6550 and email, F.J. Coffield@ncl.ac.uk).

6. See Coffield, Frank (1997) "Can the UK become a Learning Society?", King's College, London, Fourth Annual Education Lecture, 26 June. Lecture available from King's College and from the author.

7. Similar recommendations have been made by, for example, the EU White Paper on the Learning Society which advocates a "personal skills card" (1995, p8) and by the CBI with their notion of a "skills passport" (1995).

8. The first edition of the *Journal of Lifelong Learning Initiatives* (JOLLI) in July, 1997 brings news of an ambitious project to transform the County of Kent "into a garden of enterprise and learning". The local TEC, however, has developed two separate

strategies - one to encourage economic development and the other to promote Lifelong Learning.

9. I am grateful to David Halpin for bringing Giddens book to my attention and so preventing this account becoming too pessimistic.

10. My thanks to my friends Bruce Carrington, Lynne Chisholm, Tony Edwards, Phil Hodkinson and Jackson Hall for their perceptive comments on an earlier version of this paper.

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CHAPTER ONE

LIFELONG LEARNING AND LEARNING ORGANISATIONS: TWIN PILLARS OF THE LEARNING SOCIETY

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European Commission

All human ideas have their times and places. Like Leonardo da Vinci's aeroplane designs, they may be around for a long time before they are turned into the reality of flight. And who, from the vantage point of those almost playful beginnings as a new leisure sport for rich young men, could have envisaged its social and cultural consequences in an age of mass mobility?

By analogy, this is the task with which we are all confronted in thinking about the nature of the learning society and its implications for individuals and organisations in the future. The European Year of Lifelong Learning (EYLL) and the Commission White Paper *Teaching and Learning: towards the learning society* can be seen as intentional points of crystallisation for reflection and debate on these issues. Together, they underline the centrality of education and training to any strategy for maintaining and renewing the economic and social fabric of Europe. In other words, these debates are intellectually fascinating in themselves, but their urgency lies elsewhere. The time has come to put lifelong learning into practice, and in order to do so effectively, we must construct 'places' - learning organisations - in which all citizens can actively participate in learning on a continuous basis.

This contribution has three elements. At the reflective level, it recalls some of the issues that underly the call to introduce lifelong learning into the mainstream of education and training in Europe, and suggests that individual and institutional change must go hand-in-hand if this is to succeed. At the policy level, it might be helpful to look at the scope of the European Year, and at the lessons that have emerged so far. Finally, projects that have been funded through the European Year provide examples of how to think and act more innovatively, and particularly in an organisational or contextual sense.

Encouraging non-traditional learners to participate in education and training is a key issue in the transition to the learning society. The recent White Paper thematic conference on combating social exclusion[1] concluded, for example, that combating exclusion is best seen in positive terms of assuring inclusion. To promote social inclusion effectively in the learning society of the future, we need to be much more courageous altogether in redefining the concept and practice of schooling as a field of action and organisation.

Schools, the archetype of modern education and training provision, can be seen as the organisational corollaries of mass industrial society, under which economies of scale and standardised infrastructures provide a context in which, on average, people will find their way through, if not necessarily optimally. Teaching and learning processes and relations, for their part, are predicated upon highly specialised vertical and horizontal divisions of labour and upon societies where knowledge and technology decay fairly slowly: the older and more experienced/knowledgeable pass on what they know to the younger and less experienced/knowledgeable, on a 'once-and-for-all' basis.

On both counts, change is inevitable. Developing the full potential of all citizens demands flexibly organised and individualised, active learning on a continuous basis, and this, as innumerable commentators have stressed, now makes eminent economic sense as well as promotes social justice. Such changes are of particular importance for those to whom our initial and continuing education and training systems and processes simply have not been able to respond well, and which perhaps cannot, in their present form, hope to do so. They are important because the pace of technological and occupational change means that the consequences of poor or outdated qualifications are becoming much more serious than in the past. But equally, the increasing complexity of European cultures and polities means that

lifelong learning is becoming an essential element in support of active citizenship and social cohesion.

At the same time, the challenges posed by the learning society address themselves to us all. If, as it was recently pointed out at another of the White Paper thematic conferences, the half-life of an engineering degree lasts no more than a couple of years or so, then what might that mean for a sociologist who graduated almost a quarter of a century ago? And yet: becoming accustomed to the need to renew and upgrade knowledge and skills seems almost straightforward when compared with coming to terms with the shifting patterns of social and intergenerational relations that accompany contemporary technological and economic change. If self-socialisation was the catchword of the 1980s, then reverse socialisation is becoming that of the 1990s: not only have young people begun to look to each other as sources of information, knowledge and values - they have now begun to teach their elders, too, most obviously in relation to the new information technologies and the learning opportunities that these can bring, but often also in relation to the personal flexibility and openness demanded of citizens in multi-ethnic and mobile societies.

The twin demands of individual and institutional change

The literature on contemporary social change and its implications for the life-course points to the conclusion that, whilst the importance of gaining certified qualifications and skills continues to rise in an absolute sense, personal and social competences are also becoming relatively more significant for people's chances to shape and manage their lives, both in paid work and in the private sphere (self-development and participation, learning and leisure, family and personal life).[2]

These personal and social competences are centred on the capacity to analyse and respond proactively across a range of contingencies and alternatives. They match emerging worklife patterns of flexible careers taking fluid shape over a long period of time, in contrast to the sequentially-phased, 'one way only' (and, it should be added, deeply gendered) life-course patterns characteristic of advanced western industrial societies. Demographic changes, expressed in longer life expectancy and (on the whole) in falling birth rates, are also implicated in these developments: people have longer horizons within which they can plan and lead their lives, whereas the labour force certainly no longer requires rapid replenishment from below, in the generational sense.

This all suggests that the high significance of initial transitions between education and the labour market for the course and quality of worklife and career trajectories in modern societies to date may well begin to decrease - with one very important proviso: the consequences of poor or 'failed' initial transitions are more serious than ever in marking trajectories into marginalisation and exclusion. This alone reminds us that the shift in perspective towards lifelong learning should not be interpreted to mean shifting the quantitative balance of attention away from young people and towards older age groups. On the contrary, it implies a major rethink about the design and delivery of learning opportunities for all citizens, about access and accreditation routes, and about the organisational contexts in which learning can and does take place.

And finally, the effectiveness of modern transitions systems between education, training and employment - originally developed in economies with buoyant and expanding labour markets

and subsequently redeveloped as active labour market policy measures in response to their collapse - that exist in most parts of the Community is arguably declining.[3] Facilitated by the new resources of the information society, more 'traditional' ways of negotiating transitions through the use of personal and social networks (which, it should be added, never really disappeared) may once more be gaining ground - as virtual communication networks into which individuals can tap as and when it suits them. But to make effective use of these circuits, people must be able to access the networks and know how to navigate them autonomously. This is just one example of the reason why 'learning how to learn', and to do so with confidence and independence, has been identified as the single most important competence that citizens of learning societies need to acquire.

On this basis, it can be argued that 'knowledge societies' offer unprecedented means to empower social actors.[4] Whether they will fulfil this promise or not depends, however, not only on individual capacity to become lifelong active learners, but also on our collective capacity to recast existing organisational forms in ways that both facilitate and motivate such learning for everyone, at different stages of their lives and in differing circumstances - and which equally permit the fruits of that learning to be harvested for the individual and for enterprises and communities, i.e. both economically and socially.

In brief, this implies less institutionalised organisations - whether in the educational, business or public administrative worlds - that operate more like networks than like systems. This means open access, communicative and responsive frameworks constructed as permeable matrixes that permit freedom of movement between problems, locations and teams - and which see personal and professional development on a continuous basis as an essential investment in future economic and social well-being.[5]

The term 'learning organisation' refers precisely to these kinds of qualities. Learning organisations recognise that successful future development depends, above all, on an abundant supply of qualifications and competences amongst their staff; they work consistently to ensure that this supply is continuously renewed, and that all individuals can find opportunities and spaces in which to apply and develop what they know. In more practical terms, learning organisations have four key characteristics: decisionmaking is decentralised, work functions are integrated, communications operate through lateral networking, and hierarchies are flat.[6]

Evidently, changes in the concept and practice of management are a core feature of learning organisations, whose role becomes one of facilitation and mentoring - and ultimately, in reversal of traditional practices, one of servicing the needs and demands of the workforce. Ensuring an active, informed and learning workforce should be an essential aspect of company policy, just as ensuring an active, informed and learning citizenry should be an essential aspect of public policy - not only as a keystone of democracy and participation, but also because by no means everyone has a paid job or a secure employment contract.

However, to propose that the relationships between individuals and institutions must undergo considerable change in the transition towards a learning society may be an interesting theoretical statement, but it tells us little about what progress is actually being made at the moment. Here, without doubt, there is a need for more systematic information and research. Examples of excellence notwithstanding, we still know too little about the broad sweep of organisational change in enterprises of different kinds and sizes, for example. More generally - and despite the remarkable efforts made by OECD in this field, some of the results of which

are to be presented at this meeting[7] - the information available on provision and take-up of continuing education and training (CET), together with in-depth analyses of individual motivation, differential access, and the return on learning investment for companies, employees and individuals in general, remains very patchy indeed.

When this kind of research-based information is more widely available, it will become easier to interpret the findings of the recent Eurobarometer lifelong learning survey[8] and to draw clear policy and practice conclusions from these. For example, 73% of the survey respondents said that they want to continue learning throughout their lives, and 15-24 year-olds were only slightly more likely to say this than older respondents - but those young people who did not want to do so were more likely to attribute this to their disinclination to return to a formal schooling environment, whereas older respondents were more likely to say that they do not have the time to do so. Nevertheless, the majority of all respondents who are not attracted to the idea of lifelong learning simply say that they see no reason, in their case, to continue education and training participation on a long-term basis. This contrasts with the 56% of survey respondents overall who do think that continuous learning has become a necessity, with 15-24 year-olds, on this count, significantly more likely to agree with that view (68%).

These figures suggest, in the first instance, a two-thirds: one-third split in the European Community population at large, with a significant minority being non-motivated to take up lifelong learning opportunities (were these available in the first place, of course). Yet it is difficult to know precisely who falls into the group of the non-motivated, what their life circumstances actually are and what kinds of learning opportunities might succeed in changing their minds. The survey data do show, however, that the proportions of respondents who are motivated towards lifelong learning vary widely between and within the Member States: 92% of the Danish over against 49% in Austria; 70% in the eastern German states compared with 60% in the western German states; and, incidentally, at 86%, well above the EU average in the United Kingdom.

These differences are fascinating, and whilst some explanations are likely to spring immediately to mind, much remains highly speculative. But these varied patterns of response probably tell us rather more about the national and regional institutional contexts and traditions in which people have come to understand and behave in relation to learning and working than they do about imputed national-cultural differences in mentalities and motivations.[9] The Eurobarometer data go on to indicate the gap between generally positive orientations towards lifelong learning and actual participation rates: only 22% of respondents had taken part in a training course in the preceding twelve months. Once more, variations between Member States are marked: 45% in Denmark but only 7% in Greece; once more, differing levels for eastern and western German states (33% and 22% respectively); and the UK again above average at 31%.

We might reasonably conclude that, in general, the level of potential demand for lifelong learning is not matched by sufficient or appropriate provision, i.e., for whatever reason, the potential is not activated in practice. Furthermore, it is quite likely that not only the level and distribution of motivation, but also actual participation rates themselves, are together and separately influenced by the nature and direction of public and private policies and practices on the supply of CET and adult and community education in general. Thus, on the face of it, there is every reason to suppose that if we can succeed in raising the scope, the nature and the quality of the supply, then participation rates will rise - especially since 22% of the

Eurobarometer respondents said they would be prepared to pay for part of their continuing training costs themselves, and half said they would conditionally be prepared to do so. Nevertheless, it should be added that the majority (two-thirds) also think that public funds should be available to help with the financial outlay involved, and almost half (44%) take the view that companies should contribute too.

Finally, it must, once more, be underlined that inequalities of access to and participation in lifelong learning continue to exist, even if this remains difficult to document systematically for all sectors and dimensions of access and participation. This is not an individual matter, but a social issue, and therefore demands concerted action at the level of policy and practice. As the OECD report *Lifelong Learning for All* succinctly concludes, a vast body of research unequivocally confirms that highly qualified employees and those in higher level positions (in particular higher level managers) participate more in CET than the less qualified and those in lower level positions; that public sector employees do so more than those in the private sector; that full-time employees do so more than those on part-time contracts; that participation rates usually decrease with age, tenure and work experience; and that men are more likely to pursue CET than are women.[10] And this takes no account at all of the patterns of participation in adult and community education, or in further and higher education for 'mature' students, both of which are rather differently skewed, but hardly less so. One way to summarise all this is to say that those arguably more in need of lifelong learning opportunities are less likely to receive them (and, in some cases, of course, to seek them in the first place).[11] This is an appropriate moment to turn attention to the European Year and some of the activities it has supported.

The European Year of Lifelong Learning in focus[12]

If there is one phrase that can be almost guaranteed to appear in all recent documents about lifelong learning, then it is this: the idea has been around for a long time, but there has been little practical progress so far in making it a reality for the population at large. The aim of the European Year has been to lend impulse to the process of doing so. The decision to mount EYLL was an outcome of the 1993 Delors White Paper *Growth, Competitiveness and Employment*, which concluded that human resources development - and hence, education and training investment and participation - is the key issue in maintaining European competitiveness, which, in turn, is essential to economic and social well-being across the Community. The decisions of the European Parliament and the Council to adopt the Commission proposal for EYLL underlined that lifelong learning for personal fulfilment and the practice of active citizenship takes equal priority with the more directly economic aims of promoting lifelong learning.[13]

The European Year, after wide consultation, identified four broad themes as a framework for its activities. These are:

- the concept and practice of lifelong learning itself against the background of macro-social change;
- lifelong learning as a strategy for furthering equal opportunities in education, training and social participation generally;
- laying the foundations for lifelong learning through well-rounded and broad-based education for all young people; and

- promoting the European dimension of lifelong learning as education for active citizenship and mobility.[14]

During the course of the Year, the four themes that have emerged as the focal concerns of those engaged in the Year and its activities are as follows:

- laying the foundations for lifelong learning in initial education and training: improving basic skills and learning to learn together with strengthening school-work links and in-company training, so that young people do not fall at the first hurdle of transition to active life;

- preparing people of all ages for rapidly changing economic and social environments and their contextualisation within the information society, as an interim step towards developing the learning society;

- responding more appropriately to the diversification of needs and demands for education and training, not only job-related and organisationally-based but also for personal development and based on non-formal access routes; and

- lifelong learning as an element in the reshaping of the life-course and the social division of labour, in which paid work may take on a different kind of rhythm, scheduling and significance in individuals' lives.

Overall, the debates and the activities that have taken place within the framework of the European Year have brought the themes of citizenship, tolerance and democracy to the forefront of interest and concern. The Year has placed a particular emphasis on projects and activities that can reach people in their everyday lives, especially those who have fewer learning opportunities and may be less motivated to take advantage of those to which they do have access.[15] One measure of the success the Year has had in this respect is that no fewer than half the successful funding applications came from groups which were participating in a European Community programme for the first time.

Empowering Citizens - Some Examples

Selecting three examples of interesting and valuable projects from the 550 that have been funded is hardly an easy exercise, and will become progressively more difficult over the coming months, as more and more information about their progress and outcomes becomes available. Those included here, in an inevitably brief form, have been chosen because they each focus on empowering non-traditional learners, illustrate different aspects of making lifelong learning a reality for ordinary people, and, finally, are not only British initiatives, but were also able to furnish some detailed information on their activities at short notice.

Cicero - Community Initiative for Citizenship Education Regionally Organised

Co-ordinated by the Workers' Educational Association (WEA) in South Yorkshire, the Cicero project aims to give unemployed groups a voice in designing the kind of learning opportunities that they need to improve their chances of getting jobs, but equally to understand how political and policy decision making works as a basis for the practice of active citizenship. The project wants to produce a report with recommendations on how education and training systems need

to change so that they are more responsive to low income and unemployed people, to disseminate their findings at a conference, and to integrate the participating groups into European networks. As part of their learning programme, the project brought its participants to Brussels to spend four days exploring and investigating how the European Union's decisionmaking and executive structures work, and to find out more about Community policy and action in education and training. The Cicero project is an interesting one because it is based on active learning methods for people whose circumstances and opportunities are more likely to exclude them from the polity rather than give a sense of agency and belonging. It makes the valuable point that whilst the unemployed may well need vocational training to upgrade their qualifications, they also have legitimate demands on a wider front, and can learn to articulate these in just the same way as any other citizens.

The Big Issue Foundation Training Award Project

In the past few years, cities across Europe have seen the appearance of newspapers and periodicals sold, and to varying extents written and produced, by the homeless as an alternative to street begging. This collaborative project, based in Bristol and involving a number of local partners, wanted to develop a new approach to meeting the training needs of homeless people by creating a tutorial/mentor system for The Big Issue vendors. The idea was to identify their training needs, to encourage vendors to appreciate that training can help them to manage their lives, and to secure recognised core skills accreditation for a combination of non-formal and organised learning. The core skills were defined in terms of the experiences and demands of the vendors' own lives, both personally and in their work roles. Although it took a good deal of time and patience to dismantle initial suspicions of 'officialdom', 48 vendors were eventually recruited and only ten have been lost to the programme. The majority have gained or are still pursuing their accreditation, a third have proceeded to further education or training, many have now found somewhere to live and four have even found another job. In the course of the project, the tutors have come to appreciate the extremely difficult situations with which their tutees have to cope on an everyday basis, so that for marginalised groups like this one, education/training and personal-social issues cannot be regarded as separate issues. At the same time, the critical role of acquiring basic skills - literacy and numeracy - for making further progress has been underlined, together with the need for intensive, one-to-one relations between tutors and tutees. The Big Issue project is innovative for three reasons: it links personal and social circumstances with learning processes; both sides learn, not only the 'tutees'; and tailor-made learning programmes that recognise non-formally acquired skills are an integral part of the design.

Inn-Tuition

This project has to count as one of the most imaginative funded under the European Year. The idea, it is reported, was raised during a casual dinner conversation, and the result is a rapidly spreading programme of pub-based learning modules, initiated by a Leeds further education college in conjunction with a regional brewery that wants to re-establish pubs as community centres - places where all sorts of people, of all ages and backgrounds, will feel at ease and at home. The college, for its part, wants to find ways of attracting 'a hard core of people who think that education isn't for them' by persuading them that things have changed. The ultimate test will be to find how many of these non-traditional learners have graduated from the free 'taster' courses onto the subsequent regular courses run in the pubs (at a small participant fee) and then, most importantly, onto other courses held in the usual college

environment. The pub-based courses cover a range of topics, but focus on people's everyday lives - such as metric-imperial conversion measurement, coping with stress, calligraphy for Christmas cards and, of course, how to order drinks in French and Spanish.

Inn-Tuition manages to combine fun with serious educational aims so effortlessly that, as with all the best ideas, one wonders why no-one had thought of it before. It is a project that genuinely breaks the mould, illustrating not only the potential of creative partnership between education and business (and after all, workers' education and debating groups often used to meet in pubs) but also the importance of remaking the context in which learning takes place. There can be no better conclusion to this contribution: where innovation and change is demanded of individuals, established ways of doing things must change to keep pace. This, too, is something that only we, as a matter of individual and collective will, can achieve.[16]

Notes

1. In the context of debating the White Paper *Teaching and Learning*, the European Commission is holding a series of five conferences, one on each of the five White Paper objectives (encourage the acquisition of new knowledge, strengthen school-business links; combat exclusion; promote proficiency in three languages; treat capital investment and investment in training on an equal basis). Four of these were held in autumn 1996; the last will be held in early 1997. The publication of their proceedings is planned for early 1997.

2. These ideas are explored at greater length in Chisholm (1997a), which also includes an extensive bibliography on the contemporary theory and research literature in this field.

3. Much evidence indicates that not only adults (for whom information, guidance/counselling and training/job-search services are recognised to be generally underdeveloped) but also young people making initial transitions use the available services far less, and with less success, than might be hoped or supposed; and there are marked differences by social origin, educational level, gender, ethnicity/citizenship, and Community region in levels and patterns of usage and satisfaction. The recent series of CEDEFOP studies on vocational guidance and counselling include discussion of these issues (see Chisholm: 1994).

4 Stehr: 1994: 231; the term 'knowledge society' broadly corresponds to the term 'learning society', and is expressed thus in French; the White Paper Teaching and Learning, originally written in French, is titled *Enseigner et apprendre: vers la société cognitive*.

5. The vision encapsulated here is comprehensively described in terms of the transition to a new modality of knowledge production in the scientific world and in higher education institutions in Gibbons *et al.* (1994).

6. See Stahl, Nyhan and D'Aloja (1993), which provides a detailed account of the concept of learning organisations and a guide to the existing literature in this field; but also Longworth and Davies (1996), the background monograph for the EYLL theme conference.

7. The OECD *Jobs Study* (1994) and CERI's *Education at a Glance* (1995) include data on CET participation rates for a number of OECD countries. These data are summarised and complemented with brief case-studies of selected countries in the OECD report *Lifelong Learning for All* (1996).

8. As reported in INRA (1996). This survey was commissioned for the EYLL and was conducted with a representative sample of just under 20,000 respondents aged 15+ in all fifteen European Union Member States in November 1995.

9. All the available data, including that collated and analysed in the OECD reports mentioned above, illustrate that CET participation levels and profiles do differ characteristically between countries, just as is the case for initial education and training.

10. On this last point, then, it remains the case that women are underrepresented in CET, especially on courses of longer duration and of more advanced level, despite the fact that they are well represented - if not overrepresented - in adult and community education. This is partly because of women's less favourable labour market and occupational positions, but it is also the case that women employees are less likely to be offered learning opportunities by their employers and managers than are their male colleagues employed at the same level. An interesting series of recent UK reports on individual commitment to learning from the points of view of employers, employees and training providers raises, inter alia, precisely these issues (Hand, Gambles and Cooper: 1994; Metcalf, Walling and Fogarty: 1994; Tremlett, Thomas and Taylor; 1995).

11. Instance and Rees (1995: 17) make exactly this point, for example, in noting some of the findings from the 1992 Welsh Social Survey on education and training. Within a general picture of low CET participation rates, those employed in manual, personal service and agricultural occupations in Wales were significantly more likely than average to be CET non-learners. This means that those whose employment is most vulnerable to current economic restructuring in Wales are those least likely to be involved in job-related education and training. This can be illustrated with another example from southern Europe, reported in the *Bulletin of Women and Employment in the European Union* (April 1995, No. 6): the restructuring of female-staffed manufacturing sectors and the prevalence of insecure employment contracts in personal service occupations places low-skilled, older women workers in Portugal at the highest risk of long-term employment. 40% of long-term unemployed women aged 35-44 have only basic level education qualifications, and 85% have never received any vocational training. However, only 14% of available training programmes are designed for reskilling older workers, and many such women are reluctant to undertake such courses anyway, thinking that the skills they offer are not relevant to them. Many of these issues are discussed in a study of women returners' needs and demands for vocational guidance and counselling in five Member States (Chisholm: 1997b).

12. I would like to record my sincere thanks to my colleagues Jimmy Jamar and Roger O'Keeffe in particular, and to the EYLL unit staff in general, for their information and advice in preparing this section of my contribution. They are the real experts on the European Year.

13. The independent background paper prepared for the European Year makes the point that achieving the potential of lifelong learning is unquestionably crucial for the future of the European economic area, but must be founded in the practice of active citizenship: "the underlying goal is a peaceful Europe able to channel the energies of its peoples towards the values of peace, democracy, co-operation and shared prosperity" (Gass: 1996: 9).

14. These four themes have been further specified into the following topics: open access to quality general education (including self-directed learning opportunities); ensuring all young people receive vocational training leading to recognised qualifications; improving the quality of CET and its links with initial education and training; motivating those experiencing, or likely to experience, educational underachievement and failure; strengthening co-operation between education/training and business;

raising awareness of lifelong learning amongst the social partners, and also amongst parents; developing the European dimension in terms of mutual understanding, opportunities for mobility, promoting the transparency of qualifications, and encouraging the acquisition of language skills.

15. The EYLL budget is 8.4m ECU; almost half of this sum (4m ECU) has been earmarked for projects at local, regional and national level. The rest was equally divided between European-level and media projects, and technical support (publications and publicity activities). Of the 550 projects and activities co-funded by the Year, 27% went to education and training organisations, 13% to companies, and 16% to public and voluntary associations (such as the social partners or professional associations); 19% was awarded to youth, women's and senior citizens' groups; and 13% to groups aiming to promote equal opportunities and the struggle against social exclusion. (11% went to groups falling into none of the above categories.)

16. This paper represents the personal professional views of the author, does not necessarily reflect EU policy positions and does not engage the European Commission in any field of its activities.

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CHAPTER TWO

LIFELONG LEARNING FOR ALL: INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE AND COMPARISONS

Thomas Healy
OECD

OECD Interest

It is my pleasure to speak to you this afternoon on a subject which is central to the policy agenda for the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. The OECD was founded to assist industrial economies in the post-war period to achieve economic growth and social stability. Since the 1960s, the OECD has increasingly been involved in promoting analysis and policy guidance in relation to all aspects of education and training. The Centre for Educational Research and Innovation, in particular, has played an important role in promoting research on lifelong learning. This began in the late-1960s and early 1970s as an initiative to promote the theme of recurrent education and lifecycle alternatives.

Today, the subject of lifelong learning increasingly occupies the centre stage of education policy in many of the 29 countries which today make up the OECD. In January of this year, Education Ministers meeting in the OECD to address the issue of lifelong learning, issued a communique in which they committed themselves to developing stronger supports for learning throughout life. Ministers accepted lifelong learning as the guiding principle for policy. In the communique, they also stressed the intrinsic value of lifelong learning in developing the creative and adaptive capacity of individuals as well as in contributing to economic and social development.

Changed economic and social context

We are living in a time of unprecedented change. Throughout the OECD, Governments and policy-makers have grappled with changing social and economic circumstances as they attempt to use constrained budgets to achieve better outcomes through the education and training systems. Faced with rapid technological change, increasing globalisation of markets and greater mobility of workers and students, educationalists need to be constantly attuned to the needs of individuals and societies. The satisfactory acquisition of one or more foreign languages for all young people has become an important issue for policy in countries of the European Union.

Frequently, the term Lifelong learning is used to describe various forms of adult education, especially but not exclusively, continuing vocational education. In Japan, the term "social education" (Shakai Kyoiku) describes organised educational activities (including those for physical education and recreation) for adults and young people, other than those provided in the curriculum of schools or in institutions of higher education. Lifelong learning covers all forms of learning from birth to death. Perhaps the time has come to speak more of school-work transitions than *the* school to work. Increasingly, in many OECD countries, individuals are moving from the formal education system to combined education and employment situations, or are moving from employment back to training and education for second-chance learning. Forms of delivery and patterns of demand are changing significantly over the years so that today, we witness a much more diversified provision of educational services. There are more flexible modes of attendance and delivery, and a more widespread participation in post-compulsory as well as post-secondary education including vocational training outside the formal education system. The need for high quality information on education and training facilities is of central importance. Equally important is the provision of guidance and counselling at every stage in the lifelong process of learning.

The focus of policy makers and analysts has tended to shift over the last three decades away from considerations about broad access to post-compulsory schooling to issues of efficiency in the utilisation of resources in the context of tight fiscal and monetary environments. Increasingly, the issue of efficiency in use of resources is leading to concern with the quality of educational programmes and the extent to which our education systems prepare individuals for life by imparting necessary skills, knowledge and values. The question of access, in particular for less advantaged social groups, still remains a crucial one in policy discussions. There is a clear link between education and social equity although it is not always clear how educational policies can be harnessed to promote greater social equity. There is a new risk of polarisation between those with access to training and new skills, and those who are left on the margin. Segmentation and polarisation may arise with the development of high-skill elites with access to more learning opportunities. In this sense, opportunities for updating skills are unevenly distributed.

The transformation of the concept of lifelong learning into reality involves a radical challenge to our education and training structures. Lifelong learning must be seen as a process providing flexibility for all learners. The formal education system has developed with sectoral divisions and compartmentalisation. Greater links are necessary between the sectors and between the school and external learning partnerships. The school needs to be a community resource, used by learners of all ages. The termination of formal schooling must be seen as only a stage in lifelong learning and not a once-off investment on which a dividend can continue to be received throughout life.

The ageing of populations in most industrial societies will increasingly make demands on public expenditure, especially in the early decades of the next century as dependency ratios will rise. In addition, opportunities and demand for learning by older workers, including those approaching retirement will become increasingly evident. The dependency ratio in OECD countries defined as the ratio of persons aged 65 and over to total working age-population will increase from 20% on average currently to around 37% in 2040.

Changed work organisations, more flexibility in the labour market contract and less hierarchical organisations are encouraging the acquisition and rewarding of skills and competencies which are not necessarily encapsulated in existing formal education qualifications. Full exploitation of new technologies implies a move away from "Taylorist" models of work organisation characterised by pyramid structures to more flexible work organisations characterised by team work, high skill levels, initiative, creativity, problem-solving and entrepreneurship. Narrow job-design is giving way to flexible job-design. Total quality management, just-in-time learning and production, call for higher levels of skill and flexibility. How well do our formal education systems equip young people for this? How well do enterprises, public authorities and other providers of training equip adults to adjust to new social organisations?

Job-turnover and obsolescence of certain skills are forcing a re-evaluation of training and skill needs. Telecommunications together with new work patterns are tending to bring about greater flexibility in time and location of work and with it, important changes in the demand for new skills. Added to this, the reductions in time spent at work over the last century has increased the amount of time available for education and learning as well as other activities. Individuals need to be adaptable and over-specialisation may represent a risk. Vocational

preparation needs to be accompanied by the acquisition of a broad range of skills in a rapidly changing economic and technological environment.

Recent OECD efforts to measure skills

Recent survey work carried out by the OECD and Statistics Canada in the International Adult Literacy Survey - IALS - (OECD, 1995), is being analysed and developed further in a second data collection round which also involves the United Kingdom. Three types of skills were tested in IALS covering ability in interpreting document, prose and quantitative material. In the future it is planned to extend these areas to cover the following areas: written skills, oral communication, team work, problem solving and learning of new technology. The results of IALS found that many adults, especially those in the older age-groups, had great difficulty with simple reading and arithmetical tasks, such as eliciting the relevant information from a text, reading from a chart, and understanding an insert (e.g. a medical prescription). For the seven participating countries in the first round of IALS in 1994, between 6 and 24 % of adults were classified at the lowest level of literacy - able to complete only the most basic of reading tasks.

The results of IALS showed a clear link between education and literacy but also considerable variation in measured literacy levels within each educational level and age-group. The survey also revealed that literacy improves with practice, and deteriorates if not used. For a given level of education, individuals are more likely to have higher levels of literacy if they use their ability to read and work with numbers at work and in their daily lives. Hence, efforts to improve literacy will be most effective if they are part of a wider effort to increase the day-to-day use of reading and writing. IALS also revealed that few adults acknowledged that literacy was a problem for them. In some countries, a majority of adults even with the lowest levels of literacy did not consider that reading skills limited their job opportunities at all. Clearly, a strategy to improve literacy and productivity needs to be linked to measures to improve recognition of literacy shortcomings on the part of individuals.

The role of learning in economic development

The role of learning and education in economic growth has been a relatively neglected area in economic analysis. The same holds true in the area of business accounting for human capital assets in enterprises. Human capital as an intangible asset is difficult to measure both in terms of its stock value, and its impact or return. There is a conceptual and measurement black box in explaining how human capital is transformed into outputs. Investment in human capital is more easily measured with reference to proxies such as educational qualifications gained in the formal education system, but less so with regards to the process of acquiring knowledge and skills outside the formal education system. We may define human capital as the knowledge that individuals acquire during life and use to produce goods, services or ideas in market or non-market circumstances. We can think of knowledge as being represented in three ways -- embodied in physical things, embodied in persons and disembodied. Human capital resides not only in individuals but in societies and communities, where shared values, social relationships based on trust, sharing of information and adoption of certain norms all contribute to social cohesion and prosperity. Economists, statisticians, educationalists and accountants have failed to measure human capital adequately.

In May of this year, Finance Ministers of OECD countries meeting in Paris requested the OECD Secretariat to develop an initial set of indicators of human capital investment based on existing data, and to analyse areas where significant gaps remain in internationally-comparable data. This request stems from the growing recognition of the importance of the quality of human resources to the competitive success of nations and regions in the global economy, and the reduction of social inequality. Policy-makers are increasingly concerned about the returns to different forms of public expenditure in the context of the need in many countries to reduce public sector deficits and enhance the effectiveness of public expenditure. There is a need to provide better information on human capital formation in the context of changes in the location of learning and in the knowledge needs of enterprises and society.

It is useful to identify an accounting framework for the costs and benefits of lifelong learning. Traditionally, analysts have tended to treat expenditure for education and training as if it related to a consumption activity rather than an investment in skills and competencies with a pay-back in terms of economic growth, greater social cohesion and higher personal satisfaction. The measurement of these returns is difficult especially when they relate to non-monetary returns such as the personal satisfaction and welfare which individuals enjoy as a result of learning. We cannot measure the effects of schooling solely with reference to labour market outcomes. For example, rates of return to education for women may in some cases appear to be lower than those of men depending on how returns are measured. However, some women, and men, may voluntarily opt to spend significant portions of the lifecycle outside the labour market for family or other reasons.

The measurement of the effects of learning on individual and social outcomes is subject to some controversy as different theories and empirical findings are advanced to support the view that education and training serve primarily to sort or filter individuals in the labour market rather than to contribute to an increase in productive or social capabilities. The truth perhaps lies somewhere between two extreme positions. A number of influences on growth come into play including the so-called externalities or spill-over effects of more education. As some individuals are more highly educated, there is a positive effect of higher skill levels on the productivity and earnings of others. As we move to a more knowledge-based society, the paradox of economic growth and high unemployment suggests that the crucial bottleneck may be insufficient human capital more than other factors. Many of the social benefits from education may be extremely difficult to measure, especially those relating to lower crime rates, better health and greater social cohesion. However, these effects are undeniable. In the context of a more flexible and more prolonged learning pattern throughout the lifecycle, the returns to individuals, enterprises and society become critical as well as the policy-related issue of who should pay for lifelong learning.

In the table below, a matrix of costs and benefits for the three main consumers of education -- individuals, enterprises and government -- are presented. The matrix is divided into two parts - reflecting the distinction between formal learning in the regular education system (including the area of early childhood education), and formal or informal learning outside the regular education system such as in publicly-sponsored training programmes, enterprise training and informal learning by individuals.

An accounting framework for costs and benefits in lifelong learning

	individuals		businesses		government	
	costs	benefits	costs	benefits	costs	benefits
arly childhood ducation	fees	foundation skills	taxes	foundation skills	direct outlays	foundation for learning + social cohesion
Compulsory chooling	tuition fees + other educational costs	future productive and social capabilities	taxes + direct financial contributions	improved cognitive and behavioural attributes of workers	direct outlays	higher skill levels + social cohesion, economic growth + tax returns
ost-ompulsory + igher education	tuition fees + other educational costs + foregone earnings	skills/qualifications leading to higher earnings + employability + job quality + quality of life	taxes + direct financial contributions	improved cognitive and behavioural attributes of workers	direct outlays	higher skill levels + social cohesion + economic growth + tax returns
ublic labour narket training rogrammes	tuition fees + other training costs + foregone earnings	skills/qualifications leading to higher earnings	taxes + direct financial contributions	improved cognitive and behavioural attributes of workers	direct outlays	higher skill levels + social cohesion + economic growth + tax returns
nterprise raining	depends on terms of contract	skills/qualifications leading to higher earnings	direct outlays + wages paid	enterprise-specific knowledge with improvements in productivity	zero to full subsidy	higher skill levels + social cohesion + economic growth + tax returns
nformal earning	opportunity costs + direct costs	economic and non-economic gains depending on qualifications earned	cost of lost production time due to learning	enterprise-specific knowledge with improvements in productivity	zero	higher skill levels + social cohesion + economic growth + tax returns

ource: Riel Miller, OECD (in Measuring what people know -- Human Capital Accounting for the Knowledge Economy, OECD, 1996)

Measuring the incidence of continuing education and training

The OECD through the *International Indicators of Education Systems* (INES) project has since the early 1990s made considerable progress in improving international comparisons of statistical information about national education systems. One of the most interesting indicators published by the INES project in *Education at a Glance* (the forthcoming edition of which [OECD, 1996a] will be published on 9 December, 1996) has been the rate of participation by adults in job-related continuing education and training. Although the data have been taken from broadly similar sources such as the *Community Labour Force Survey* in the case of European Union countries, it is not always possible to compare countries on the same basis. However, a number of salient features are evident from data for 1993 and 1994. Firstly, for countries that have been able to report data on training in the previous four weeks of the survey (which includes the United Kingdom), there is considerable variation across countries in the rate of participation. Together with Denmark, the UK emerges with a relatively high rate of participation in training by adults who are employed for one half of the EU countries which reported data. The measure includes all employed persons between the ages of 25 and 64 who were engaged in some form of job-related training in the previous four weeks. This could refer to part-time job-related courses in schools and colleges as well as on-the-job training provided by employers. Informal learning or training is not included. Secondly, the rate of participation in job-related training almost invariably rises with highest educational level: in other words, persons with higher education qualifications have a higher propensity to engaged in training than persons with a GCSE or O Level qualification. Thirdly, participation tends to fall with age for given education levels.

In IALS, it was found that on average, around one third of adults reported participation in some form of organised learning. For six of the seven countries, a majority of persons with the highest of the five levels of measured document skill were receiving training in the previous 12 months (OECD, 1996b). IALS also found that participation in training tends to be higher for those with higher levels of educational attainment as well as for younger age-groups. Training also tends to be higher in industry sectors which are the fastest growing. It was also found that there is a large variety of provider modes of training (formal education sector, off-the-job training centres, on-the-job training, home). TV/Radio/Audio/software aids are increasing in use but classroom modes of delivery still predominate.

The position of the UK vis-à-vis other countries

At higher education level, the United Kingdom has an exceptionally high level of mature students (aged 21 and over) entering for the first time. The number of 21 year olds or older accounts for almost one third of new entrants to higher education courses in the UK compared to less than 10 percent in many other European countries such as Belgium, France, Greece and Ireland. On average across EU states, just over 15% of all entrants to higher education are aged 21 or over (a figure affected by factors such as later completion of upper secondary compared to the UK as well as military service in some countries). The proportion for 30 year olds and over is 17 percent in the case of the UK - a relatively very high figure by international standards and one which in the EU is not reached except in Sweden and Denmark. As against this, the United Kingdom tends to fall behind other countries in terms of the overall percentage of the adult population aged 25-59 which attains to a level of education equivalent to A Level (or NVQ level 3). The UK also has a lower rate of participation in higher education for those in their 20s. For example, at age 22-25, participation in higher education including non-degree

courses (full-time and part-time), was 8% in 1993/94 for the UK compared to a corresponding OECD average of 15%. The respective percentages for 26-29 year olds were 4.5 and 6.5%. In 1993, 50% of the total population aged 25-59 in the UK had highest educational attainment at least A Level or GCSE/O Level combined with a vocational programme level (NVQ level 3 or below). The corresponding figure for 11 EU countries (excluding Italy) was 59% (EUROSTAT, 1995). The UK national target for education and training in the year 2000 is that 60% of the workforce should be qualified at NVQ level 3 or advanced GNVQ or 2 GCE A level standard.

Demand for continuing education and training

Typically demand exceeds supply for continuing education and training. From the results of IALS, job reasons evidently predominate over personal interest for both men and women. However, personal reasons tend to be stronger for women than for men. Reasons for non-participation mainly related to time, lack of money and family responsibilities. Demand and participation in training were positively related to the measured level of literacy or skill, the frequency of reading, and participation in various types of social activities. The extent of TV watching was negatively correlated with participation in organised learning

A variety of learning needs may be identified including those associated with important points of transition in the life-cycle - (i) re-training of unemployed workers, (ii) retirement, (iii) increasing female labour force participation. With more women working in the labour force, as well as changing roles of men and women, even if only gradual, there are growing needs for training in social and technical skills required to address the complexity of combining labour market and household tasks for both men and women.

Who should pay for lifelong learning

Individuals and enterprises need to be prepared to shoulder a larger share of the burden for training and learning. Public resources need to be used strategically to achieve best returns and impact. Higher education can be funded by more contributions from learners through tuition fees, or top-up loans. Also, more cost effective modes of learning could be developed including distance learning, part-time studies, modules etc. The use of multi-media technology and distance learning is not only a cost-effective option of providing education but is one in which individuals who might otherwise be unable for various reasons to participate have more access. Greater accountability, transparency and assessment are needed in relation to the performance of learners, providers and systems. A greater degree of partnership is needed between enterprises and schools in promoting awareness and experience of work environments. Employers also need to play a more active role in educational planning and curriculum development at primary and secondary level as well as in funding of new innovations in teaching methods and curriculum. Some of these issues are being dealt with in a proposed international OECD survey of employer attitudes to education being lead by the Scottish Office Education and Industry Department.

The issue of who should pay for lifelong learning is not an easy one to resolve. It is bound up with the question of who gains from education - an area fraught with measurement problems. Research on the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) revealed that in the case of continuing education and training the main source of funding for training came from employers, followed by participants and then public authorities. Underinvestment in learning

may be an issue when social returns are badly measured and where the benefits of learning are not adequately captured in the case of privately funded training such as in enterprise based training. Misallocation of resources may result. Economic rent for competence to be gained is crucial. Competence needs to be rewarded.

Making lifelong learning a reality for all requires mobilising many actors - individuals, communities, businesses, the social partners and government. It will also require the development of a knowledge base with data, information, analysis and research on the role of learning and its impact across countries to support informed policy decisions. The OECD ministerial communique on lifelong learning earlier this year called on the social partners including the Business Industry Advisory Committee to OECD (BIAC) representing employer and business organisations across the world, and the Trade Union Advisory Committee to OECD (TUAC) to propose new ways for businesses and unions respectively to enhance training opportunities. They encouraged OECD to examine alternative models for encouraging firms to provide high-quality training.

Some recent initiatives in promoting lifelong learning in OECD countries

In the case of early childhood education, skills laid in early life affect the propensity to continue learning. In the course of compulsory schooling, poor schooling may impair learning and adaptation in later life - students may not acquire work skills or discipline and they may encounter little of the demands they encounter in the labour market. In addition, disadvantaged or less academically inclined students fare worst. Combined with family, community and social influences, school is an important transmitter of social capital -- it helps to set the context of learning throughout life. Ministers meeting in the OECD earlier this year acknowledged the vital role of parents in providing an environment and foundation for lifelong learning. They also committed themselves to the adoption of more flexible curricula, individualised learning paths, and the exploitation of new teaching and learning methods that foster cross-curriculum skills.

At the post-compulsory stage, changing modes of transition from school to work have lead to more overlap between the labour market and education as well as more flexibility in course provision. Policy needs to facilitate transition and to encourage a greater parity of esteem between different transition paths. The United Kingdom offers an interesting example of policy innovation and reform in recent years with the advent of more flexible pathways from the end of compulsory schooling to employment. Further education as the term is understood and applied in the UK provides an example of how part-time attendance can be combined with participation in the labour force. The dual training apprenticeship system which characterised Germany and some adjacent countries offers a model which has facilitated adjustment in the transition of young people. However, this system is currently being reviewed with a view to its flexibility in meeting rapidly changing skill needs.

Recent analyses of labour market trends by OECD have indicated that new employment opportunities requiring higher skill levels are increasing at a rate of 10% of the total labour force each year. However, the inflow of recently qualified young people from the initial education system is typically around 3 % of the total labour force in any given year. Clearly, there is a challenge to governments and enterprises to match training provision to ever-increasing skill requirements in a more competitive work environment. In removing the barriers to lifelong learning, individuals who may be locked in by geographical, family or other

personal circumstances need to be given more access to training opportunities. Training for employees in small to medium sized enterprises as well as the unemployed needs to be addressed.

Skills and competencies earned outside the formal education system may be inadequately certified or acknowledged. Hence, we need to encourage new ways of defining and measuring skills which are acquired both inside and outside the formal training systems. The idea of a "personal skills card" has been raised in the White Paper on lifelong learning of the European Commission (European Commission, 1995).

In Sweden, a nationwide promotion of adult education was launched by the Government in 1995. A national parliamentary commission has been established to promote goals for lifelong learning. Major emphasis has been placed on raising the educational attainment of adults to at least upper secondary level or its equivalent.

In Australia, in an attempt to reform the national training system, the Government has promoted the recognition of prior learning, regardless of source, using a common assessment of competencies framework.

In Canada, a number of provincial governments have initiated measures to certify prior learning and knowledge acquisition. Such prior learning may take place through work experience, community experience and independent study. The aim is to assess such learning and to certify it according to equivalents in the formal education and training system.

Similarly, the development of National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) in the United Kingdom for the assessment and accreditation of skills has helped to change the use of traditional school-based assessment in guiding decisions of individuals, employers and training providers.

The aim of various approaches to promoting continuing education and training is not only to expand provision but to remove barriers to training through, for example, the provision of more transparent assessment criteria for skills and competencies acquired inside and outside the formal education system, a greater use of transferable course credits and course modules, and a more flexible provision of courses to facilitate those in employment or those with family commitments. Measures to certify prior learning in many countries including the United Kingdom have not been without controversy. In many respects, the state of the art is still very much at an early stage of development. The success of schemes to promote prior learning assessment depends on co-operation between different actors including employers, other providers of training and individuals.

Conclusion

Governments can no longer rely on a policy of gradually expanding enrolments in the regular education sector to meet the demands for new and high-level competencies. Strategies to promote learning over the lifecycle need to involve in each country a number of actors including different public agencies and Ministries, as well as public and private bodies. Countries can learn from each other about different strategies and choose what is most appropriate in a national context. Here, the OECD can together with other international organisations play an important role.

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CHAPTER THREE

THE POLICY OF UK GOVERNMENT ON LIFELONG LEARNING

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I am very pleased to be with you today at a conference exploring what is meant by the phrase we all hear so often these days: "the learning society". I am particularly pleased that part of the backdrop to this conference is the Learning Society Research Programme funded by the ESRC over the next 3 years. That work, directed by Frank Coffield, offers the prospect of substantial research underpinning the case for and development of the lifetime learning agenda.

My brief this morning is to give you an overview of the UK Government's policy on lifetime learning. This session is an hour long, but I can sum up the sixty minutes by quoting the words of James Paice, the Minister for Training:

> *If we lack skills, we lose out. The economy, the performance of every business and the prosperity of every citizen suffer. We have no choice. We must all invest in learning for the future.*

Why is lifetime learning so important?

So there is my simplified executive summary. Let me now build up the detail. I want to cover two particular areas this morning:

- first, why is lifetime learning so important? and
- second, what does the Government believe must be done to make it a reality in this country and, linked to this, what is being done?

Why then is the Government investing in lifetime learning? Why are local and regional bodies, education and training providers and employers doing the same? After all, none of these are easy touches and these days all keep tight hold of their purse strings. Their reasons probably fall under three broad headings: we learn for *economic, cultural and social* reasons.

The economic agenda

Whether we are concerned with the nation's economy, business or our own personal prosperity, we learn in order to improve our competitiveness. The economic trends are quite clear:

(1) it is the countries with highly skilled workforces which will compete and win in an increasingly global market; capital moves; what will distinguish countries is the quality/adaptability of its workforce and the quality of management;

(2) the labour market is changing all the time. In 1981, 20% of jobs were at senior management or professional level, while 24% were unskilled or semi-skilled. In 5 years' time, these figures are likely to be 29% and 16% respectively. Part-time employment has increased by nearly 25% since 1984. And self-employment has almost doubled since 1979. I suspect that the labour market will go on changing in those directions;

(3) we are living during a technological revolution. New technologies in the information world are changing the ways that we do business, changing the nature of marketing; changing the ways that we learn. We must either master new developments, or be left behind; and

(4) the nation is growing older. In 25 years' time the percentage of people over 65 will be twice what it is now. We want to deploy the talents of older workers: their learning also bears on the country's competitiveness. The more that older people can do to support themselves, the more fulfilled they will be and the greater their contribution to the wider community;

(5) lastly, as Sir Christopher Ball persuasively argues, learning pays. It pays in human terms and it also pays financially. For instance, in 1990 a technician earned about 50% more than his or her unskilled counterpart, compared with only 30% more in 1979. And in 1994, only 4% of people with degrees were unemployed, compared with 16% of those without any qualifications.

Arguments that provide politicians in the UK, the EU and OECD. But they are not the only arguments nor necessarily the most important arguments ultimately.

The cultural and social agenda

The figures I have just quoted reveal the gap which, ironically, learning can create in society. Highly skilled people enjoy prosperity; people without skills fall behind. But we have got to bridge the gap. By tackling under-achievement and failure through learning, we are helping to build a more united and a more cohesive society. Learning benefits the family. Parents play a vital role in encouraging their children to develop the learning habit - and vice versa. Finally, learning breathes life into culture. It contributes to the well-being of the nation.

The State of Play

So there are clear economic, cultural and social arguments for investing in learning. How then are we doing? Have we seized on learning as a competitive advantage? Are we all, in our various ways, responding to the challenge? My answer, as you might expect from a colleague of Sir Humphrey Appleby, is: "On the one hand, yes. On the other, no." Yes we have made good progress, but no, there is still a long, long way to go.

Achievements

On the positive side:

- The National Curriculum and testing at key stages are laying the foundations of learning for life in our children. The vast majority of young people now continue education and training beyond the age of 16, in sixth forms, in colleges, via Modern Apprenticeships and so on. And we are seeing the results of this at exam time. This year saw a record pass rate of 85.5% at A level and the best ever results at GCSE, with 53.7% of entries gaining grades A-C. The newer GNVQ is also showing well - some 84,000 students have achieved full GNVQs so far and a further 50,000 have gained units towards them.

- Mature students are coming into their own. In higher education, they now outnumber young people going straight from school to university. In further education, over half of the 2.4 million students enrolled in 1995 were 25 or older.

- 25,000 organisations are committed to Investors in People and over 4,300 organisations have already achieved Investor status. This means that about 6 million people - or 28% of the total workforce - work in organisations publicly committed to developing their employees.

Room for improvement

Can we do better? Of course we can and we must.

(1) Training is still not high enough up on the agenda of most small businesses: the vast majority of small businesses do not have training plans; do not see training as part of their business; and do not perceive the value and opportunity of improving the skills of their employees.

(2) While surveys regularly report universal agreement that learning is a "good thing", not enough adults are actually learning. According to a recent NIACE survey, just over a half of the working age population has current or recent experience of learning - which means that just under half has done no learning in the last three years. The same survey tells us that 4 in 5 of the people who have done no learning since leaving school are unlikely to do any in the future. They do not see learning as for them

(3) As many as 1 in 6 people of all ages in England and Wales have very poor basic skills. Of course very few people in the UK cannot read or understand numbers at all. But the skills they have are simply not good enough for modern life. They can read only hesitantly; they find spelling and punctuation all but impossible and have problems with even the simplest calculations. That is a national disgrace. But it is a particularly stubborn statistic. The position has hardly changed since the war.

(4) We must do more in schools by improving the Curriculum to establish work-related aspects and to encourage the use of the National Record of Achievement.

Government policy

So where do we go from here? I hardly need to remind this audience that last December the Government undertook a national consultation on lifetime learning. Our consultation paper went to over 4,000 organisations and we received almost 500 responses. We heard from employers, colleges, universities, TECs, careers services, trade unions, professional bodies and many others. Three points stand out from the responses:

(1) everybody seemed to agree that the lifetime learning agenda is one that matters;

(2) there was also agreement that the responsibility for investing in it is shared between employers, individuals and Government; and

(3) there was widespread willingness to support lifetime learning, to promote it and to facilitate it.

Following this successful consultation, the Government published its *Policy Framework for Lifetime Learning* in June. We reckon that we've now sent out about 8,000 copies so far and the requests are still coming in.

The Framework is not the basis for a new, all-embracing Government lifetime learning programme. Rather, it is a structure on which to build for the future. It takes the best of what we already have and offers the chance to develop it. I hope that it will be a dynamic structure pointing the way to progress over a period of years. It looks at the various roles of employers, individuals, providers of education, training and vocational guidance and, of course, Government itself.

The Framework is built around 6 key elements. I intend to spend some time going over them with you. Today is, of course, Budget Day. As well as the news we all wait for about tax rates and excise duties, this is the time when Government Departments set out their expenditure programming and priorities for the future. So, I am hamstrung. I have no specific news of new measures for you this morning. Let me however look at some of the specifics of the framework of policy.

1. Employer investment in training and development

Employers are central to lifetime learning. It is only they who can take decisions about the skills their businesses need. It is their responsibility to make sure they have those skills available. The result is that employers fund most adult education and training and have a strong influence on the decisions that everyone in work takes about his or her own development.

The evidence is clear that the best companies recognise the value of training and development. They know that businesses which systematically tackle their skill needs report significant improvements in productivity and wastage rates. And that means profits. Consider a few examples of recognised Investors in People:

- Birds Eye Wall's in Gloucester has seen a 20% increase in productivity and a 15% fall in overheads;
- 80% of the workforce in the vehicle distributor, Appleyards of Chesterfield, have a nationally recognised qualification; and
- Excellon, a company making precision automation equipment and with only 29 employees, has seen its UK market share grow from under a third to over a half.

These are just some examples of why the best businesses spread their development effort across all of their people.

The Government has given and will continue to give TECs resources to help employers make progress towards Investor in People status and to offer extra help to small firms via initiatives such as Skills for Small Businesses. And from next April TECs will have more freedom to assist business in a single employer training budget linked closely to DTI's Business Link. This change will help ensure that investment in training is firmly rooted in the overall process of business planning and investment. We see IIP as crucial in the private and public sectors. It is

a British innovation, a British quality standard and one that is increasingly admired in Europe and beyond.

2. Getting individual commitment

Now important as they are, employers are not the full story. In these changing times, individuals also have a role. They must take greater responsibility for acquiring marketable and transferable skills. They must come to see learning as something in which they have as much interest as employers, if not more.

This represents an enormous challenge for the education and training system. I have used the term "individuals" almost as if it is a collective noun, yet nothing could be further from the truth. Individuals are, by definition, individual! So the system needs to respond to everyone from the university graduate looking for further professional development to the man without qualifications and whose last experience of learning was the day he left school at age 15; or from the 16 year old who has just started college to the woman returning to learning after years of bringing up a family.

I suggest that the basics of a responsive system are that:

- it promotes the benefits of learning to everyone;
- it offers quality, impartial information and guidance services;
- its provision is as accessible and flexible as possible;
- it accommodates the concepts of individual choice, rights and purchasing power.

In short, it is learner-centred. This cannot happen overnight. Our research shows that we still have a long way to go. For example, personal investment in learning has risen only slightly, from 9% in 1986 to 15% in 1993. However, we are making progress, with the development of local and sectoral strategies for individual learning and national schemes like Career Development Loans and tax relief for vocational training.

In the last two years, the Government has funded some 90 TEC-led projects to develop local strategies to help individuals and employers invest more in individual development. The strategies are wide-ranging - they embrace everything from increasing awareness and motivation among non-learners to using new technology such as the Internet, CD ROMs and on-line services to provide vocational information.

On similar lines, we have also been working with Industry Training Organisations to develop sectoral strategies. ITOs, and in time the National Training Organisations, have an important role in carrying forward the lifetime learning agenda.

We know from research that cost is a key factor in decisions about learning. Government support schemes such as tax relief for vocational training and Career Development Loans are designed to overcome this problem.

- Vocational Training Relief is available for any training capable of counting towards N/SVQs and, in some cases, for other vocational training. Since its introduction in 1992, over £47 million has been paid out in relief, supporting an investment by individuals of about £189 million in their own development. Tax relief represents a permanent discount on the cost of training - at the current basic rate of tax that means 24% off.

- Career Development Loans help people pay for learning by offering a deferred repayment bank loan. More than 75,000 people have invested over a quarter of a billion pounds in their own training through CDLs.

So far I have described what you might call "supply side" initiatives. These are not enough. We need also to inspire people with the desire to learn. We need to convince them of the personal benefits of investing in learning. That is why initiatives like Adult Learners' Week, with its national and local focus, are so important. I want to see a process whereby in practice Adult Learning Week takes place every week of the year.

And then there are Employee Development Schemes. I do not want to steal Malcolm Maguire's thunder (see Chapter 8), but I will do a short commercial. Employee Development Schemes offer employees financial support from their employer for learning of their own choice, usually unrelated to their jobs. Since Ford introduced the first scheme in 1989, many firms have come on board and we estimate that there are at least 700 schemes operating now. But why are all these hard-headed employers investing in these schemes which offer training *unrelated* to work? The answer is simple: it pays off in improved motivation and confidence among employees and the resulting contribution to higher standards of productivity and quality.

3. Information, advice and guidance

It is widely acknowledged that high quality information and guidance are critical to developing the lifetime learning agenda. This is essential infrastructure and was the one point on which everybody was agreed in responding to last year's consultation. The Government has long recognised this and has over the years invested considerable amounts in the development of services - for example, £8m on the development of local Gateways to Learning services and £25m on Skill Choice, a pilot programme to develop a market for vocational guidance. But we need to get beyond pilots to something permanent.

In the *Policy Framework*, the Government announced that it would be:

- working with providers to develop national standards for guidance;
- looking to develop local partnerships to provide well signposted and co-ordinated information services; and

- considering the scope for introducing a national information helpline.

4. Relevant and accessible opportunities

I have already made the case for the responsive and flexible education and training system. Let me now say a few words about how the system is developing.

(a) Further education

The FE sector has expanded greatly in recent years. Total student numbers increased by nearly 20% between 1992 and 1995, from 1.85 million to 2.2 million. The sector delivers about 400,000 academic qualifications per year and is responsible for the majority of vocational qualifications, particularly at level 3. Open learning centres, information technology and distance learning are among its tools.

Its students range from 16 or 17 year olds, recently out of school and getting to grips with A Levels or GNVQs to pensioners. They attend full-time or for as little as an hour or two per week, day-time or evening. They study for a wide range of academic or vocational qualifications for a variety of reasons - vocational, leisure etc. Lifetime learning in action. Helena Kennedy's Committee is examining the case for still wider participation and the routes to breaking down the barriers to access.

(b) Higher education

Higher education is no less important to lifetime learning. There has been a step change in HE participation rates. It is not only young people who now go to university in larger numbers : there has been much growth in the number of mature students, many of whom study part-time.

- in 1979, 1 in 8 young people went on to HE. The figure is now 1 in 3;
- the number of people aged 25 and over in HE has doubled in the last ten years;
- there are over half a million part-time students of all ages, at all stages of life, and over 50 % of these mature students study part-time.

The HE sector has shown much enterprise and innovation in its response to the needs of lifetime learners. This response arises, in part, as a result of the Government's commitment to diversity in higher education, and an approach to funding which encourages universities to play a greater part in lifetime learning than is perhaps the norm in the rest of Europe and elsewhere. Ron Dearing will no doubt be reflecting on ways of putting lifetime learning at the centre of the university remit.

(c) New technology

Whatever the sector, further or higher education or schools, new technology is now a key factor. In Britain we have a good record in developing new and innovative approaches to learning. We have a vigorous open learning sector and a degree of expertise in multimedia and telecommunications.

However, there is much to do. We need to apply our experience to creating new learning opportunities in the age of the Internet and superhighways. The Government is playing its part by, for example, helping to improve TEC expertise in new training methods; stimulating the supply of advice and information to employers; and helping the further education sector to exploit technology.

Since we are in the North East, I will quote a local example of HE, FE and technology coming together to present a responsive learning package to adults. The University of Sunderland and Gateshead College have joined together to set up the "Learning World" at the Metro Centre in Gateshead. This aims to promote and encourage lifetime learning for individuals and companies by bringing learning closer to lifestyle and work style. For those who don't know it, the Metro Centre is one of the largest retail parks in Europe. The potential customers of the Learning World are the Metro Centre's 6,000 employees and its annual 28 million shoppers and visitors. Near the Centre there are 100,000 households and an industrial estate with 8,000 employees. It may seem odd to site a learning centre next to a shopping mall, but many adults don't want to go back to the classroom - they've been there before, or they have unhappy memories of school or they don't have the time or confidence to seek out an institution. Learning World is relaxed and informal and open Monday to Saturday all year round. Its courses are determined by its customers and range freely across FE and HE.

5. Basic skills

The economy and society depend ultimately on the contribution of individual people and we cannot waste the potential of any individual simply because he or she lacks basic skills. With its support for the Basic Skills Agency, Literacy and Numeracy Centres and schemes like the Family Literacy Initiative, the Government aims to ensure that every young person has a proper command of the basic skills of literacy and numeracy when they leave school, and that every adult without those skills should have a good opportunity to acquire them in later life.

The results of investing in basic skills is clear. Look at the case of - for the sake of anonymity - Mary. She joined an Adult Basic Education class in a Bexley library and has never looked back. She used the library computer and some of the Adult and Basic Skills Unit's learning materials to improve her writing skills and books to help her pass her driving test. She is aiming for the City and Guilds certificate in communication skills and says "I now feel good about myself". What comes through the diaries is the return of confidence - the new confidence and self-esteem that new learning brings.

6. Effective partnerships

The final element of the Framework is partnership. One body - even the Government, with all its resources and influence - cannot bring about the culture change needed for the learning society. If we are to succeed, we must work together, each focusing on what lies within our power or expertise. What we cannot achieve alone, we can often bring about by working with others.

Learning cities and towns are a good example of partnership. More and more places in the UK are adopting the title, including Liverpool, Sheffield, Edinburgh, Hull, Birmingham and much smaller places like Retford in Nottinghamshire and Thetford in Norfolk. Learning cities represent a way of bringing together all the relevant partners in a locality to make lifetime learning a reality. This can be achieved through sharing resources and expertise, and working towards collective goals as in the Kellog-Foundation TEC partnerships.

Conclusion

I want to end on this note of partnership: national partnership, through the Campaign for Learning, to set the framework; local partnership to promote, to open up access, to respond to need, to inform and to guide.

As the Secretary of State has said:

> *Lifetime learning has to be the concern of us all.....No one, however well intentioned and willing to invest time and money, can make lifetime learning a reality by acting alone. The message is clear. We must work together.*

CHAPTER FOUR

A TALE OF THREE LITTLE PIGS: BUILDING THE LEARNING SOCIETY WITH STRAW

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So the wolf huffed and he puffed and he huffed and he puffed. The house of straw fell down and the wolf ate up the first little pig.

This paper has two main aims. First, it will be argued that the policies of both the British government and of the European Commission (EC) with regard to building a learning society are considered to be timid, narrowly conceived and inadequate to the task. Politicians are trying to construct a new society with the intellectual equivalent of straw rather than bricks. It is, however, easier to criticise than to construct; and so the second aim is to outline briefly an alternative White Paper on Education, Training and Employment and to propose some more robust policy alternatives for discussion and debate.

1. A CRITIQUE OF BRITISH AND EUROPEAN POLICIES

Individuals will need to take increasing responsibility for their own adaptability and reskilling throughout their working lives.

(HMSO, 1995, p. 76)

.... the move to the learning society must be centred on the individual.

(EC, 1996, p. 51)

It might have been expected that the wide-ranging challenges to western societies (e.g. the global market, competition from South East Asia, new methods of production and new technology) would have resulted in a glorious kaleidoscope of diverse national policies. Instead, there has been a growing convergence or homogenisation of policies, based on the same naive *"technocratic model"*[1], which presents a dangerously over-simplified account of the impact of changes in production and technology on education and training, and which is everywhere couched in the same language about *"the drive for competitive advantage"*.

Raymond Williams noted the common approach by national governments in the worldwide scramble for productive advantage and commented perceptively as follows:

..... I have gone from reading the English newspapers on these familiar themes and then read for some weeks the French or the Italian or the German newspapers only to realise, beyond the differences of language, that the same analyses were being applied, the same remedies proposed, as if each were the only people in the world. This talk is described by its practitioners as tough and realistic, but even where it is benevolent it is a fantasy. ... most of this talk is by smooth men in sleek offices taking no significant risks. The real toughness is all at the other end ... where the edge of the most currently competitive economies (at whatever costs to their own workers and citizens) can cut into other societies and depress or ruin them (1983, pp 96-97).

More recently, Paul Kennedy has suggested the possibility of political instability, the collapse of the post-1945 social contract, and even the failure of one or more Western democracies as a result of the unprecedented speed, range and intensity of globalisation. Over the next generation, he argues, 1.2 billion Third World workers will move into worldwide production and exert a *".... colossal depressive force upon real wages in the richer countries .... such*

wages may tumble by as much as fifty per cent in certain economic sectors over the next two or three decades" (1996, p. 6).

Kennedy's apocalyptic and pessimistic vision of the devastation to be caused by the *"wolf"* of globalisation is in stark contrast to the reassuring assessment of the impact of the global market arrived at by the European Commission. Although it acknowledges that there is a risk of a social rift, the White Paper, issued by the EC and entitled *Teaching and Learning: Towards the Learning Society,* concludes that : *"Internationalisation thus simply strengthens Europe's position on the world stage"* (1996, p. 24, emphasis as in original).

When the stakes are so high, it is imperative that the political responses of national governments and of regional trading blocks are subjected to independent and constructive scrutiny. For example, many of the policies which have been developed in the UK and in Europe on education and training have been based on human capital theory, but Ralph Fevre argues that since these policies *"take no account of the real orientations people have to education and training, they are doomed to fail"* (1996, p. 19). Fevre outlines three ideal-type orientations - those who hold the first orientation undertake only the minimum amount of training that their employers insist upon; those with the second approach acquire education and training credentials with the sole aims of improving their employment prospects; while those with the third tendency value knowledge and skill because they appreciate the connection between constantly improving their own performance, that of their firms and national economic prosperity. His argument is that the first two orientations are the predominant ones in the UK and that policies designed to encourage individuals to invest more in their human capital (by means of markets, vouchers,, loans etc.) may only reinforce these attitudes at the expense of the third orientation which is a prerequisite of economic success. As a result we run the serious risk that in higher and further education *"the UK will veer towards the US model of higher participation rates but with much education and training being of dubious value"* (Fevre, 1996, p. 12), because students will have increased their credentials rather than their understanding.

For a second example, take the claim of Madame Edith Cresson, the European Commissioner for science, training, youth and education, who in a major speech to launch the European Year of Lifelong Learning in the UK, argued as follows: *"Every day thousands of people lose their jobs because their know-how is out of date"* (1996). When the multitude of reasons for unemployment in Europe is considered - the relocation of industry to developing countries, automation and changes in production, international competition, lack of investment, high interest rates, corporate *"downsizing"* etc. - it is perverse to single out one particular reason (a lack of skills on the part of individuals) to carry the total burden of explanation. And if causation is considered to be singular, then it will be no surprise if political remedies are also narrowly conceived.

It is this heavy concentration on the role of individuals which is the weakest aspect of both British and European policies on education, training and employment. Both sets of policy documents exhibit other serious deficiencies - an underdeveloped vision of what a learning society could be, a conservative and timid acceptance of the necessity to decrease public expenditure on social welfare, a pervasive reluctance to challenge the views of leading employers, a comparative neglect of the role of institutions in change, and a general willingness on the part of administrators and civil servants to serve up what they suspect will

be acceptable to their political masters - but space precludes any detailed study of the impact of the *zeitgeist* on the development of policy.

The main thrust of policy in both the UK and in the EC is to give the pivotal role in constructing the Learning Society to the individual. The European Commission's Report on education and training returns to its central theme five times in a publication of a hundred pages, as in this quotation:

> *If this White Paper has placed so much emphasis on the role of the individual as the main protagonist in that society, through his (sic) self-reliance and the thirst for knowledge which will enable him to take charge of his own future, it is only to highlight the role of school in this process* (1996, p. 48).

Even if the logical *non-sequitur* about schools is ignored, the sexist language which excludes one half of the population is unlikely to inspire confidence in the Commission's vision of a new inclusive society.

The same individualistic trend in policy is evident within the UK, where the present government's aim is to make the country *"the unrivalled enterprise centre of Europe"* (HMSO, 1966, p. 6); it is a soulless and uninspiring vision of the future. The aim of increasingly transferring responsibility for education and training to individuals can be clearly seen in all the three annual reports on competitiveness produced by the British government since 1994 (HMSO, 1994, 1995 and 1996). It is tempting to equate this stress on the individual with the prevailing Western ideology of the sovereign individual of capitalism. But as Abercrombie, Hill and Turner *argue "There is no dominant ideology in modern capitalist societies"* (1986, p.191); capitalism, they claim, has been acquiring a more collective character, witness the displacement of individual firms by corporate ownership. Such economic developments have not, however, made much of a dent in the social and political cult of the individual which remains endemic. That claim will be justified by three pertinent examples taken from the publications of: the employers' organisation, the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), the Association of Graduate Recruiters, and the Campaign for Learning.

First, in translating the notion of "individualism" into policy, the CBI has proved to be a highly persuasive pressure group, producing a series of influential papers on introducing national targets and creating a market in vocational education (CBI, 1989 and 1991) and developing training and learning credits (CBI, 1993). A few, brief quotations will be given as a means of encapsulating the thrust of their arguments. Their 1993 document on Careership begins with the statement: *"Individuals are the key to the UK's Competitiveness"* (CBI, 1993, p. 7) and the *News Release* which accompanied this document argued: *"The concept of lifelong learning requires the individual to become an independent learner"*. Having identified a major skills gap in the British workforce as compared to other countries, the CBI proposed *"Careership"* as the solution:

> *Careership gives pride of place to the individual and his or her responsibility for self development in a market environment.*
>
> (CBI, 1993, p. 13)

The four key elements which make up the CBI's notion of Careership are transferable, core skills; personal profiles and individual action plans; high quality, independent careers guidance; and training credits which are said to motivate and empower young people. To summarize, the CBI called for *"a paradigm shift in individuals attitudes towards investing in their own skill development"* (see Rees and Bartlett, 1996, p. 6).

These ideas, with few significant changes, have been adopted and implemented by the present British government; for example, the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) issued a consultation document on Lifetime Learning which claimed that *"the balance of responsibility for investment in skills will shift more towards individuals"* (DfEE, 1995, para 3.7). Further evidence of the determination of government to persuade individuals to pay more for their own training can be seen in the establishment of an Individual Commitment Division within the Department of Employment which commissioned a comprehensive programme of research, resulting in a series of reports on individual commitment to lifetime learning (e.g. Maguire, Maguire and Felstead, 1993). This Division also survived the amalgamation of the two departments (of education and of employment) into the combined DfEE. To encourage individual commitment to lifelong learning, the Department has introduced a number of initiatives including: Gateways to Learning (advice for adults), Access to Assessment (helping individuals to acquire qualifications), Skill Choice (assessment for employees), Career Development Loans (finance for individuals to pay for courses), Small Firms Training Loans, and Vocational Tax Relief (25 per cent tax relief off the price of training leading to NVQs).

The second example comes from the highly influential organisation - the Association of Graduate Recruiters, which consists of 500 employers and university graduates in the UK. In 1995 the Association published *Skills for Graduates in the 21st Century* which claimed that *"the complete graduate needs four types of skills: Specialist, Self-Reliant, Connected and Generalist", but "without the skills of Self-Reliance, other skills can be wasted"* (AGR, 1995, pp 18-21). Predictably, of the four types of skills, only Self-Reliance skills are explained in any detail and they are broken down into the following twelve sub-skills: self-awareness, self-promotion, exploring and creating opportunities, action planning, networking, matching and decision-making, negotiation, political awareness, coping with uncertainty, development focus, transfer skills and self-confidence. Each of these twelve sub-skills is in turn said to be composed of three, four or five further skills to make a total of 43 in all. Such detail and such precision must, one assumes, be the considered distillation of a large-scale, empirical study of the tasks being performed by graduates in the most forward-looking of British companies. The reasonable expectation is that factor analysis has been employed to produce the 43 discrete sub-skills which are apparently needed for the new careers of the 21st Century. Instead, the text limply admits that the list of 43 sub-skills (which ranges from *"able to define and promote own agenda"* to *"good telephone skills"*), *"is not exhaustive or perfectly defined, but includes many of the attributes .... which employers and academics have identified as critical to the success of graduates in the 21st Century"* (AGR, 1995, p.18). In other words, this *"strategic assessment of graduates' future roles"* turns out on examination to be a highly selective amalgam of untested speculations from focus groups and interviews with interested parties. Fundamental changes to the curriculum of higher education need to be based on more robust evidence which could include, for instance, a close *in situ* study of the knowledge, skills and attitudes required of graduates in the most advanced companies.

The third example is taken from the National Campaign for Learning which is co-ordinated by the Royal Society for the Arts and *which "aims to create a learning society in the UK by encouraging every individual to take an interest in learning and their (sic) own personal development"* (*Newsletter*, Issue 1), p. 8). No explanation is offered as to how a learning *society* can be brought about by encouraging and developing *individuals*. Instead, the theory of learning which is to underpin the learning society is described as follows: *"Learning is individual. It is often pursued in groups, but the experience is uniquely personal .... Learning theory examines how learning takes place within individuals"* (Bradshaw, 1996, p. 3). It is as though the work of Vygotsky, of Jerome Bruner, of Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger on cultural psychology, situated learning and collaborative cultures had never been published.

Sir Christopher Ball, the Chairman of the national Campaign for Learning, has recently explained his vision of a Learning Society for the UK and the following quotations underline his individualistic approach:

> *My vision is for every individual to have a Personal Learning Action Plan (PLAN) .... and every organisation to become a Learning Organisation .... the key principle governing provision for and pursuit of learning in the future must be the primacy of personal responsibility for learning, encouraged and enabled by the support of the whole community .... The focus of the campaign will be on individuals rather on the providers of education and training* (Ball, 1996)

The Campaign's style can also be judged from the headlines on the front page of its third *Newsletter* (1996). Under headlines which scream:

> **"I'd Fancy Some of That!"**

and

> **"Learning's better than Sex!"**

the report claimed that:

> *More People in Britain would rather go back to school than have sex*

A paradigmatic change in attitudes to learning should provide, on this evidence, an easy and perhaps even a pleasurable task. But the *Newsletter* did not acknowledge that all the 958 adults in the sample rated entertaining friends, eating/drinking out, seeing relatives and watching TV as making them happier than learning something new. Nor did it inform readers that both the 16-24 and 25-34 age groups were, unsurprisingly, happier having sex than learning something new. No figures were given for those who were happiest of all learning something new about sex.

This deliberate and pervasive emphasis on individuals has, however, a number of serious drawbacks which will now be listed:

- the great *public issue* of how to deal with structural change in society is being converted into the *personal troubles* of those individuals without skills, in the way that C. Wright Mills (1970) described. The move to increase individual commitment to lifelong learning can also be seen as an extension of the policy of privatising the main responsibilities of the life course. To single out individuals' lack of qualifications as the main cause of

unemployment is to employ the crude tactic of blaming the victim. William Ryan explains how he was inspired to develop his theory of *Blaming the Victim* by watching the comedian Zero Mostel ask his audience why the USA entered the Second World War : *"What was Pearl Harbor* doing *in the Pacific?"* (1971, p. 3). He further argued that victim blaming is often cloaked in kindness and concern, but its function is to block social change and maintain the *status quo* in the interest of powerful groups.

- it is possible that millions of British citizens will individually make rational decisions to train and retrain and yet no adequate national policy on education and employment and no marked improvement in national prosperity will result. If, for instance, far too many choose for sound, personal reasons to become hairdressers or car mechanics, the UK will not develop a highly skilled workforce for the industries of the future. This example is not a wild figment of the present author's imagination but a reference to the UK government's Modern Apprenticeship scheme which has attracted *"almost ten times more hairdressers, child-minders and shop assistants than youngsters trained in information technology"* (Anthony Bevins, 1996). There remains the deeper question of whether social policy can be appropriately based on the rational choice of individuals - see Hindess (1988).

- The conclusions from empirical research, for example on training credits, suggest that the individualist, market model *"is based on a misunderstanding of how young people make decisions and how training is planned and provided on the ground"* (Hodkinson & Sparkes, 1995, p. 192). The simplistic model of Careership based on rational choice does grave disservice to the cultural complexities involved in the choice and development of careers by young people and may as a result threaten rather than enhance the quality of their training. Their training placements, for instance, were more the result of complex negotiations between the young people, their employers, parents, career officers and training providers than they were the straight forward choice of individuals (see Hodkinson, Sparkes and Hodkinson, 1996, for details). It remains to be seen whether critical, independent research of this kind can make any dent in the official and dominant ideology of individualism; such research tends to be ignored or rejected out of hand because it shatters the illusion of control which the rational model of career choice offers policy makers and practitioners.

- appeals, and even financial incentives such as Career Development Loans, to individuals to invest in lifelong learning are not likely to re-engage those disaffected from education. As the DfEE consultation document itself argues *"further learning is overwhelmingly undertaken by those who are already well educated"* (1995, para 1.11).
A similar objection can be made to the EC's proposal to establish *"second chance schools"* which is the main measure proposed to combat social exclusion (EC, 1996, p. 62) : how is schooling to succeed a second time if it has already failed and, in the process, may have set those it rejected *against* any further education or training? Moreover, even if socially and educationally disadvantaged groups were to obtain qualifications through *"second chance schools"*, what is the likelihood that they will also obtain well paid jobs commensurate with their new skills? The question also needs to be asked: why is the response to failure in education so often the expensive creation of extensions to the system (in this case, *"second chance schools"* with specially-qualified and more highly paid teachers, working with fewer pupils) rather than using the same additional resources to reform the schools which have failed to educate so many young people during their "first

chance"? The Committee of the Regions within the EU, in its commentary on the EU White Paper, rightly argues that *"second chance schools"* prioritises the needs of young people over the needs of all others and recommends instead a *"continuous chance system"* for all, adults and young people alike (1996, para 12.7). The proposal also draws on the American experience with *"accelerated schools"* where young drop-outs are said to have *"found their way back to learning when provided with computers and the best teachers"* (EC, 1996, p. 63). Such evidence contradicts research in the UK on 16-19 year olds among whom *"poor educational attainment, strong work commitment, dislike of new technology and training are all interrelated"* (Banks et al, 1992, p. 47). Social exclusion may, in fact, be a better headline than it is an accurate description of the lives of the *"excluded"*; for instance, how can young people, who are on the streets selling drugs, drinking alcohol, stealing cars or eking out an existence doing all sorts of *"fiddly"* jobs in the *"informal economy"*, be said to be excluded from their communities?

- *"If you have the training, the jobs will take care of themselves"*. Jamie Swift quotes this irresponsible remark of the Premier of New Brunswick in Canada (1995, p. 131). Swift's book is a sustained attack upon *"the seductive myth of salvation through ever more training"*. As such it is a potent reminder that the problem facing western countries is not being accurately formulated : it is <u>not</u> one of a mismatch between skills and vacancies, but one of a dearth of jobs which require high level skills. The paradox of modern industry is that a strong manufacturing base is an essential precondition for long-term economic growth, but it does not create many jobs: so high, structural unemployment is likely to continue to co-exist even with high tech, high investment economy. Investment in education and training is a *necessary* but not a *sufficient* condition of sustained economic prosperity: the point is neatly captured in the phrase *"Let them eat skills"*. This exhortation is the title of an article by Douglas Noble, who argues that in the USA as in Germany or the UK *"The wages and job security of those still employed are steadily eroding, as organised labour has been all but destroyed, and most new jobs are in the low-wage, temporary, part-time, service sector, requiring minimal skills"* (Noble, 1994, p. 22). The result may be a highly skilled elite and a growing army of the (at best) semi-skilled and expendable.

- Brown and Lauder have recently argued that the appeal to individualism *"serves to mask the political interests of the most privileged sections of society"* (1996, p. 9). As they explain, educational and training markets enable the middle class to succeed in the competition for credentials because they enter the market with greater cultural and material capital. In addition, the focus on individuals diverts attention away from the short-termism of British finance, the absence of an industrial strategy, and the continuing failure of British employers to invest in their own workers and in high quality goods and services; there is, for instance, a severe shortfall in the number of medium sized firms which have been recognized as Investors in People[2] (NACETT, 1996, p. 35).

- the creation of a Learning Society will require a theory of learning which does not take the individual as the sole unit of analysis and which goes well beyond construing learning as a simple matter of self-direction or of transmission and assimilation. As Lave and Wenger have argued, *"most accounts of learning have ignored its quintessentially social character"* (1991, Foreward); we need a more powerful social theory of learning which will encompass not only the cognitive processes within the heads of individuals but also

the social relationships and arrangements which stimulate learning. In Jerome Bruner's words, learning *"is best when it is participatory, proactive, communal, collaborative, and given over to constructing meanings rather than receiving them"* (1996, p. 84).

It is worth speculating about the characteristics of the *"ideal learner"* or of the *"ideal worker"* in the individualistic, competitive market which the European Commission and the British government are promoting. Otto Peters describes the *"ideal learner"* as: *"the paradigmatic 'lone wolf' who relies on his (sic) own learning strategy and on his extraordinary endurance in order to survive, and who considers co-operation with other students merely a loss of time"* (in Keegan, 1994, p. 232). Mechthild Hart portrays the *"ideal worker"* in such a society as:

> *a self-sufficient nomad, migrating with moving job possibilities, keeping specific ties to neighbourhood, friends and family suspended enough not to interfere with the need for mobility. Stable, long-lasting social networks may, however, become more important for people as the uncertainty of employment opportunities increases* (1996, p. 107).

- last, but by no means least, the morality of competitive individualism can be compared to that of *"... of the free-running fox in the free-range chicken pen"* (Lipietz, 1992, p. 29). The impact of twenty years of the cult of excessive individualism has been to leave the UK more unequal, undemocratic and divided than before (see Joseph Rowntree Report 1995, for example). The pre-occupation with the market principle, competitiveness, choice, opting-out and self-interest has come to obscure the social and moral purposes of education. In the words of Stephen Ball:

> *what is being lost ... from and in UK Education is any kind of discourse of civic virtue or social ethics. The majesty of the market is so stridently trumpeted by its advocates that all else is in danger of being drowned out ... [There are] enormous dangers in the 'culture of self-interest' coming to predominate over and erode the moral underpinnings necessary to the efficiency and effectiveness of the market itself* (1994, p. 144).

The European Commission would have us believe in *"the demise of the major ideological disputes on the objectives of education"* (1996, p. 42). No such claim can be made, at least in relation to the UK, where the education system has in recent years become a battlefield between competing values. Arguments in favour of the *economic imperative* - that dominant discourse about gaining a competitive edge through individuals investing in skills - are now being openly challenged by support for a *democratic imperative*, which contends that a learning society worthy of the name should deliver social cohesion, social justice and economic prosperity to *all* its citizens rather than wealth to a minority.

It should not be concluded from the foregoing, however, that the policies of the British government and of the European Commission are identical with regard to creating a culture of lifelong learning. In one important respect, the latter differs profoundly from the former. The European Commission's White Paper wishes to usher in a new Learning Society without violent change, but at the same time it openly acknowledges that *"social exclusion has reached such intolerable proportions that the rift between those who have knowledge and those who do not has to be narrowed"* (1996, p49). This honest European recognition of a sharpening social polarisation can usefully be compared with the anodyne comment in the British consultative document to the effect that *" ..... lifetime learning is not just about the*

economy and competitiveness. It is also crucial to our national culture and quality of life" (DfEE, 1995, Foreward). The document is otherwise totally silent on social divisions within the UK and on the social and moral purposes of education. The Commission's White Paper, in contrast, argues eloquently about the need to combat social exclusion and to dismantle the structures of marginalisation, but the measures needed to reach these objectives will have to be far more radical, robust and comprehensive. Some suggestions are briefly made in the following section.

2. TOWARDS AN ALTERNATIVE WHITE PAPER

This is not the place to produce a complete programme with detailed guidelines for political action, but at least the outlines of an alternative White Paper on education and training can be briefly sketched:

- What is missing from official discourse is a fully developed notion of what a true Learning Society could be. At present we have in the UK a prosperous Learning Society for about 40 per cent of the population (Hutton, 1995). It is one of the main aims of the Economic and Social Research Council's Programme of research into *The Learning Society*[3] to develop a number of visions of what such a society could be like.

- The UK remains a seriously undereducated and untrained country; and systems and institutions as well as individuals will have to change radically if a culture of lifelong learning is to be created. As Lynne Chisholm (forthcoming) argues: *"Innovation is demanded of individuals, whereas institutions themselves are simply left to continue to behave as they 'always' have"*. In particular, the universities need to reposition themselves away from their continuing preoccupation with initial, undergraduate education towards continuing professional development and training of the workforce (see Coffield and Williamson, forthcoming[4]). Malcolm Skilbeck goes further when he claims that the OECD's thematic review of tertiary education has shown that lifelong learning is a missing dimension in the undergraduate education of all countries studied so far (1996).

- The creation of a new form of society cannot be placed solely on the shoulders of individuals. It is a responsibility which must be shared by all the social partners - government, employers, trade unions, voluntary organisations *and* individuals. The modern euphemism about "closer partnerships between education and the business sector", (which is to be found in both the EC White Paper and in the British government White Papers on Competitiveness), also needs to be unmasked. Partnership is a new weasel word to disguise the determination of the state to transfer some of the funding of education and training to the corporations. For some workers, professional and non-professional alike, who have experienced an intensification of workloads, the prospect of lifelong learning may be interpreted as more of a burden, as more akin to a lifelong *sentence*, than an invitation to personal growth and development. The distinctive role of government is to develop a new vision of the Learning Society, to formulate the main objectives of that vision and to provide the means of achieving them. Generous, far-sighted and capable employers are also needed who are constantly improving their ability to organise and deliver training to all categories of workers. The initial success of Employee Development Programmes (Corney, 1995) suggests there is a large, unmet desire for further learning on the part of many adult workers. The policy of voluntarism in relation to training is,

however, not working in the UK and legislation to enforce change is going to be necessary (see Coffield, 1992); at the very least, public companies should be required by law to declare in their annual reports what they spend on education and training, as David Finegold (1993) has recommended.

- a standard response nowadays to the turbulence in labour markets is to suggest that all employers should develop their *"employability"* and that all firms should seek to become *"learning organisations"*. But these are mutually incompatible goals because the creation of learning organisations crucially depends on the commitment of the workers who, from now on, are being encouraged to look single-mindedly after their own careers. It would be preferable for both sides of industry if the ability to remain permanently employable became a *joint* responsibility of employer and employee. Waterman *et al* (1996) raise some basic questions about the new focus on lifelong employability:

> *What responsibility, if any, does a company now have to employees? ... should management be satisfied with employees whose only loyalty is to their own careers? How can an enterprise ... create a sense of community or common purpose unless it has a relationship with its employees based on mutual trust and caring?* (1996, p. 207).

  Their own answer, based on the practice of some hi-tech firms in Silicon Valley in California, is the establishment of a career-management centre within each firm, where employers and employees *share* the responsibility for maintaining and enhancing the employability of all workers.

- Policies for educating and training need to be co-ordinated with policies for encouraging industrial growth. In the UK, there is, at present, by deliberate decision, no industrial strategy *("the market will decide")* and a surfeit of initiatives in educating and training which need to be turned into a coherent policy for lifelong learning. The impetus for change may well come from unfavourable comparisons with South East Asian economies, and particularly Singapore, which is operating a new model of skill formation, claimed by Ashton and Sung to be superior to either British, German or Japanese models. The Singaporean system is best conceptualised not as central planning but as *"a new form of government intervention .... in which the government has sought to understand the operation of market forces and use them to realise its political objectives"* (Ashton and Sung, forthcoming, p14).

- the policy of handling the main responsibility for lifelong learning to individuals would be more tolerable if it was intended to enhance the civil, political and social elements of their citizenship. The members of too many groups within Europe, however, are only *partial* or *incomplete* citizens - for example, young people without qualifications or proper jobs, the long term unemployed, and ethnic minorities. Martin Bulmer and Anthony Rees (1996, p275) are right to argue that, as in the European Commission's White Paper *"the employment of the all-or-nothing words 'inclusion' and 'exclusion' tends to compound"* the risk of treating certain groups as *non-citizens*.

- as the global economy continues to break the ties which bind citizens together, so the sources of social cohesion will need to be reinvigorated. For example, progressive income tax could be seen again as a means of promoting social justice rather than as a burden on enterprise; the intermediate institutions of civil society, those institutions capable of

standing up to the power of the state and of involving individuals in purposes greater than their own, need to be strengthened; education for citizenship could be given more space in the curriculum of schools, colleges and universities; the welfare state needs to be revitalised rather than run down; a minimum wage should be introduced and the increasing income differences reduced; the social Chapter of the Maastricht Treaty should be signed; and the UK could learn from the German law of *Finanzausgleich* which moves billions of marks from the more prosperous to the relatively disadvantaged *Länder* in order to reduce regional inequalities.

Change today is so rapid, ubiquitous, unpredictable and inescapable that attention to it tends to eclipse consideration of deep continuities, traditional inequalities and new forms of social polarisation. Amid all the modern hyperbole about the need to build a Learning Society, we would do well to remember the stubborn realities of class and power. And one conclusion can be drawn from what has happened to the UK over the last twenty years : no Learning Society worthy of the name can be built on the culture of competitive individualism.

> *When the third little pig saw the wolf coming, he ran inside his house of bricks. "I'll huff and I'll puff and I'll blow your house down", said the wolf. So he huffed and he puffed and he huffed and he puffed. But the house of bricks did not fall down.*

Notes

1 See COFFIELD, Frank (1997) in HEINZ, Walter (Editor) *New Passages Between Education and Employment in a Comparative Life Course Perspective*, Cambridge University Press for an extended discussion of the "technocratic model", its weaknesses and alternative conceptualisations.

2 While steady progress is being made towards reaching the education targets, there seems little prospect of sufficient employers being recognised as Investors in People. The figures are as follows: the target is for 70 per cent of all firms employing 200+ employees and for 35 per cent of those employing 50+ to be so recognised. But by March, 1996 only 11.4 per cent of the former and 4.6 per cent of the latter had met the standard. If the current rate of progress is maintained, it will take the larger firms 25 years and the smaller firms 33 years to meet the target set for the year 2000 (NACETT, 1996, p. 9).

3 An Information Pack which provides details about the thirteen projects which make up this Programme of Research is available from the Director, Frank Coffield, Department of Education, University of Newcastle, St. Thomas' Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 7RU, U.K.

4 The EC White Paper offers only this gentle reproach : *"Although there are over 3,000 establishments of higher learning in the European Union, their role in continuing training is modest"* (1996, p. 80). The task of transforming these 3,000 institutions of higher education will be a hard-won achievement but, as a handle on change, it surely offers more prospects of success than a strategy based on changing all 368 million individuals in the European Union.

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CHAPTER FIVE

THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE LEARNING SOCIETY: CONTESTED SOVEREIGNTY IN AN AGE OF GLOBALISATION

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On the whole, educational researchers have paid relatively little attention to the European Union. There are good and obvious reasons why this should have been the case, the chief of which is that until the mid-1980s the EU's role in education was minimal. Although the EU played a much more significant role in respect of vocational training, this attracted little interest from a generation of researchers whose interests lay in the changing nature of the school to work transition and the evolution of youth training policy; in neither case did the analytical framework move far beyond the borders of the United Kingdom. Since the mid-1980s, though, the Union's policies in both education and vocational training have developed rapidly, while its decision-making powers - its legal 'competence', in the language of the EU - have also expanded, at the expense of the sovereignty of the member states. By 1996, the Union's education and training policy focused centrally on the idea of Europe as a 'learning society' - seemingly a radical shift from the established educational thinking of the member states. This development was epitomised above all by the publication of the White Paper, *Teaching and Learning: towards the learning society*, which offered a far-reaching diagnosis of Europe's current crisis of human capital (CEC 1995).

On the surface, then, the scene seems set for the EU to direct a dramatic and progressive reconstruction of education and training policy, focused on the creation of a learning society. On closer inspection, the picture is rather less rosy. This paper argues that the EU's initial entry into the field of education policy in the mid-1980s was driven by two primary concerns, one economic and one political. The first was the perceived crisis of European competitiveness, which in turn fuelled the single market programme; the second was the possibility, systematically exploited by the Commission, of expanding the EU's competences in an area which had traditionally lain within national sovereignty. The outcome was a compromise, embodied in the Treaty on European Union (popularly known as the Maastricht Treaty), which clarified the EU's competences in respect of both vocational training and education. This has not stopped the Commission from seeking further expansion in its competences, and it has repeatedly set out its case for a radical restructuring of education and training in the form of its call for a learning society.

How did the EU reach this position, and how well-founded is its diagnosis? The present paper explores three aspects of the Union's policies for education and training. First, it considers the process whereby the Union came to embrace the radical conception of a 'learning society' at around the time when the single market was completed. It then examines two of the major planks on which the Union based its earlier generation of education and training policies, and which continue to inform its current policies: these are the internationalisation of the European labour market, and the experience of student mobility programmes. I conclude on this basis that the EU's education and training policies are at something of an impasse.

The Pathway to the Learning Society

As a supra-national policy-maker in respect of education and training, the European Union is a relative newcomer. In so far as the founding Treaty had referred to the area in 1957, it had been to charge the Union with limited tasks in the field of training, while leaving education entirely in the hands of the member states. Between 1957 and 1992, every Commission proposal was faced with assertions of sovereignty by the member states, usually acting through the Council but sometimes resorting individually to legal challenges to the Union's proposals. Yet the Union's stake in this area, and the scope of its decision-making, have

nevertheless grown steadily. As in a number of other areas, this process has often been incremental and uneven, but the result has been a transfer of competences to the European level (Pollack 1994). In the field of vocational training, the Union's role expanded considerably in the early 1970s as the entry of three new member states (whose electorates were distinctly unenthusiastic about the prospect) coincided with sharp rises in youth unemployment; the rapidly-created European Social Fund allowed the Union to subsidise youth training programmes across the member states. In the field of education policy the decisive role was played not by the Union's governing institutions (the Commission, Council and Parliament), but by judges: in allowing the Commission to treat higher education as a form of vocational training in the mid-1980s, providing a legal foundation for such programmes as ERASMUS, the role of the European Court of Justice was decisive. In other words, the Union's original entry into human resource development was contingent rather than the result of carefully prepared policies.

The generation of programmes which developed in the mid-1980s was nevertheless identified with wider policy goals. In particular, it was driven by the Delors single market programme of 1986-92, which in turn arose from the perceived crisis in competitiveness among the larger member states (Pollack 1994, 128). The education and training programmes were designed in part to promote competitiveness through the encouragement of labour mobility and in part to complement the competitiveness agenda through the creation of a 'citizen's Europe'. By the early 1990s, though, the existing generation of education and training programmes were due to expire, and the Commission launched a wide-ranging review of its policies between 1990 and 1992. In addition, the Treaty on European Union substantially clarified the legal basis of the EU's interest in this area; while confirming that responsibility for both education and training lay ultimately with the member states, the Treaty set out a number of common goals which the Union was required to promote on a transnational basis; the new framework programmes for education and training (respectively SOCRATES and LEONARDO) were launched within two years of the Treaty's ratification in 1993.

Rather surprisingly, the changes in status did not greatly alter the EU's financial support for education and training. As Table One shows, the proportion of total EU spending which was allocated to DGXXII (and its predecessor body) and its programmes actually fell after 1992. Even in 1992, which witnessed both the Maastricht conference and the completion of the single market, the share devoted to education and training represented considerably less than half a percent of the EU's total annual spending. To put this in perspective, the Common Agricultural Policy in 1994 consumed just over 49% of the Union's annual spending; the ESF took just over 8% and the Community Initiatives something under 3% (CEC 1995, 387-88).

Although the Union had certainly increased the visibility of its education and training policies, and persistently claimed that it had enhanced both their status and priority, it had done nothing to shift its pattern of spending in their favour. Moreover, despite a great deal of rhetorical criticism of member states' systems for their inaccessibility, the Union's new programmes - like the old ones - were largely inaccessible to adult learners, work-based learners, part-time learners and distance learners. This might imply that the Union was simply speaking with a forked tongue, and to some extent no doubt it was. To leave it at that would, for all its appealing simplicity, be inadequate. Alternative or - more accurately - complementary explanations need to be considered. One is the pressure on some of the smaller, discretionary areas in the Union's budget arising out of the Council's insistence on financial prudence after

Maastricht; particularly after Delors had retired, colourful flagships tended to take second place to a search for ways of adding visible value at European level. Another was the growing recognition that it was easier and more effective for the Union to pursue its policy goals in education and training by reshaping other human resources measures, such as ESF or the research and technology programme.

Table One: Proportion of the total EU budget allocated to Education, Training, Youth 1990-1995 (based on the annual General Reports of the EU)	
Year	Percentage of total budget
1990	0.32%
1991	0.39%
1992	0.46%
1993	0.42%
1994	0.43%
1995	0.40%

The changes brought about by the Treaty thus affected the EU's policies in related fields, with inevitable consequences for its overall spending on training and education. The Structural Funds were not much affected directly by the Treaty; indirectly, the Union's revised powers over training and education were bound to affect the Funds indirectly, since it was through the ESF and the Community Initiatives that much of its total spend on the area was channelled. Spending on the ESF and Community Initiatives dwarfed the sums allocated to education and training programmes, as has already been noted. Moreover, even though they too were affected by the more constrained financial regime that followed 1992 - particularly visible in the changing balance of spending between the ESF and the Initiatives - as a share of total spending they continued together to account for well above 10% of the Union's total budget (Table Two). If the Union's emerging human resources policy goals were to have any serious influence within the member states, the ESF and Initiatives were the most logical places for this impact to take effect and become visible to actors outside the charmed circle of the Union's own institutions.

In the mid-1990s, the Union started to revise its larger human resources programmes. Between 1994 and 1996, for example, the Union brought together several existing Community Initiatives into a common framework (EMPLOYMENT) which was specifically aimed at promoting employment growth through the development of human resources. As well as placing a stronger strategic emphasis on human resource development in its policies for employment creation, by bringing the four measures into one framework initiative the Union hoped to increase the effectiveness and visibility of its intervention, not least because EMPLOYMENT placed a much heavier stress upon transnational activities than had the earlier programmes (*Official Journal*, 10 July 1996, 13-22). Similar hopes informed the development of another, parallel Initiative in 1994, aimed at helping European companies to adjust to industrial change. Like EMPLOYMENT, ADAPT is chiefly concerned with funding projects in the member states; those projects must involve links between partners in at least two member states, and they must fit national priorities (the UK priorities focus on the growth of jobs in small firms and in high growth sectors such as services, tourism, and culture).

In addition, in 1993 the Union revised the ESF Regulations to strengthen and widen the Fund's activities. Administratively, the new Regulations were designed to ensure a closer and more strategic relationship between allocations under the Fund and the policies of the member states. Member states were required to draw up a plan for the programming period (1994-1999 in this case) which outlined their own policies and spending plans, and indicated where the additional allocations fitted into the national picture. The Commission and each member state were then to draw up an agreed Community Support Framework (CSF), detailing the operational programmes for which funding was requested. One national civil servant involved in this delicate process said after drafting a Single Programming Document (combining the plan, the CSF and the operational programmes) that 'the trick is in the wording - you've got to bring down the money and at the same time give your departments as much discretion as possible' (Interview, February 1995). The same interviewee noted that the negotiations were real, with constant redrafting after meetings with the Commission.

Most importantly, the Union merged two existing objectives concerned with training the unemployed, and secured additional resources for a new Objective Four with the aim of 'facilitating adaptation of the workforce to industrial change and changes in production systems'. This was the first time that the ESF had a substantial and general commitment to training for those who were already in a job. Essentially, the Union's aim in introducing this measure was to direct attention and resources towards preventing unemployment, by targeting employees in sectors and organisations where there were risks of redundancy or closure, rather than simply trying to rescue the unemployed. It provoked opposition from the UK, whose government argued that it amounted to subsidising lame duck companies, and that any company which was involved would effectively be publicised as a failing concern. The Union therefore agreed that the UK could spend its Structural Fund allocation on other objectives. A new sixth Objective was introduced covering support to regions with an extremely low population density; the only areas meeting the criteria were in the north of Finland and Sweden, both new entrants to the Union; it accounted for less than half a per cent of all Structural Fund spending. More substantially, the Union sought to ensure that the new Objective Four complemented the transnational measures supported under ADAPT. Because of the size of these two innovative programmes, and because of their direct impact within the member states, they are at least as important in their impact as the SOCRATES and LEONARDO action programmes together.

Table Two: Breakdown of the European Social Fund, 1994-1999 (percentages)	
Objective 1	47.6
Objective 2	7.8
Objective 3	27.4
Objective 4	4.9
Objective 5	2.0
Objective 6	0.4
Community Initiatives	9.0

Completion of the post-Treaty reforms did not exhaust the Union's interest in human resources issues. If anything, the Commission, frustrated by the limited nature of the changes it had been able to make, started to place education and training more firmly towards the centre of its integration strategy. As ever, a range of different reasons can be discerned for this process: some of these had to do with the internal political process within the Union, as different actors repositioned themselves in respect of further integration; there was also the intrinsic attraction of education and training as a means of solving other, often pressing problems which faced the Union. Given the Union's limited competences in this area, perhaps it was inevitable that the contrast between the discourse of crisis which permeated its analysis, and the limited nature of its proposals, should become ever sharper.

The publication in late 1995 of the Commission's White Paper did little to resolve the resulting tensions. Organisationally, the White Paper arrived by a rather unusual route. As two Commission officials noted during interviews, the White Paper was not preceded as is usual by a consultative Green Paper. Rather, it was drafted by the Study Group on Education and Training, a gathering of specialists appointed personally by Mrs Cresson in the autumn of 1995, and responsible directly to her. The title, with its reference to the 'learning society' (*société cognitive* in French, *der kognitiven Gesellschaft* in German) signals both the direction and the scope of its ambition.

In a number of ways, *Teaching and Learning: towards the learning society* was a new departure for the European Union. Of the previous generation of action programmes, only FORCE had sought explicitly to address adult learning, and there was little sign before 1990 that the Commission had given a great deal of thought to lifelong learning. However, in its *Memorandum on Higher Education in the European Community* the Commission followed a review of the demand for retraining with the suggestion that

> *These challenges imply a shift in policy terms in the balance of attention, investment and organisation as between initial and continuing education with an increased importance being attached to the latter* (CEC 1991, 23; emphasis in original).

This proposal received a predictably dusty response from the member states. However, the LEONARDO programme for vocational training paid greater attention to continuing education than its predecessor programmes, while the 1993 ESF reforms led to a new measure designed to promote the retraining of employees in declining industries. However, the White Paper represented the Commission's first policy statement based on the responsibilities it was

given for education and training under the Maastricht Treaty, and its most significant aspect was its focus on lifelong learning.

As is so often the case in the EU, the White Paper mobilised a discourse of crisis to reinforce its arguments. Alongside this rather familiar language of crisis and vulnerability, the White Paper also employed a discourse of social transformation: we read that we are in a "period of transition and profound change", a time of "historical opportunity for Europe", a period "in which one society gives birth to the next", even the dawning of a "new age". This discourse was also pursued by the President of the Commission; in a speech to the employers' federation, UNICE, in the week following the Commission's adoption of the White Paper, Jacques Santer described 'our epoch as a phase of transition towards a new society' (Santer 1995). Yet while recognising the importance of lifelong learning, the Commission largely defined its significance in terms of employment and the economy.

In the opening sections, the Commission noted the wide range of challenges facing the European economy. It singled out three main 'factors of upheaval':

- the impact of the information society upon employment and learning;
- the internationalization of the economy; and
- the development and dissemination of scientific and technological knowledge (CEC 1995, 21-6).

As a result, no one individual or organisation could expect to remain untouched. Instead of a job for life, individuals had to be as adaptable and flexible as their employers had to be innovative. In response to the uncertainty and risk introduced by these upheavals, the White Paper proclaimed that 'The society of the future will therefore be a learning society' (CEC 1995, 16). In defining this objective, the White Paper painted a rather general and imprecise picture of the learning society:

> *Tomorrow's society will be a society which invests in knowledge, a society of teaching and learning, in which each individual will build up his or her own qualifications* (CEC 1995, 5).

In places, it used the term 'knowledge-based society' as though it were interchangeable with the 'learning society' (e.g. CEC 1995, 9).

While its primary focus was upon employment and competitiveness, the Commission also argued that education and training were vital 'to the preservation of (Europe's) social model' (CEC 1995, 49). Arising from the three 'factors of upheaval', there was an '*urgent need to avert a rift in society*' (emphasis in original - CEC 1995, 48). European society had to avoid a division 'between those that can interpret; those who can only use; and those who are pushed out' (CEC 1995, 26). A new principle of post-industrial social organisation was emerging: 'the "learning relationship" will become an increasingly dominant feature in the structure of our societies' (CEC 1995, 17). Consequently, for reasons of both competitiveness and social solidarity, all must be able to seize opportunities for improvement and fulfilment 'throughout their working lives' (CEC 1995, 17). The White Paper contrasted this lifelong learning approach with the traditional emphasis upon once-and-for-all qualifications, gained at school or in initial training, and lasting with minor adaptation for a lifetime.

Second, the Commission expressed a robust view of the need for action across the entire Union. As well as the prospective impact of labour mobility throughout Europe, the nature of the three 'factors of upheaval' justified action at the European level. Indeed, globalisation and the spread of new technologies, according to the White Paper, create 'the risk of cultural uniformity' (CEC 1995, 18). Cultural uniformity was defined as the risk that new communications technologies in education will lead to a 'lowest common denominator', so that people 'lose a common heritage of bearings and reference points' (CEC 1995, 30). European civilisation is, according to the White Paper, particularly under threat at present from American domination of multi-media products, and above all of the educational software market. Thus

> *to a greater extent than before, promoting the European dimension in education and training has become a necessity for efficiency in the face of internationalisation and to avoid the risk of a watered-down European society* (CEC 1995, 51).

Third, the White Paper attempted to sketch a human resources strategy across the Union. Europe's success was said to depend on:

- acting on the need to instil a broad knowledge base; and
- building up abilities for employment and economic life.

In essence, this involved a call for measures such as greater flexibility of delivery, wider access to continuing training, closer school-business partnerships, and the recognition of prior learning. It is notable that this agenda was evidently designed to match the Commission's proposals in other policy areas. These include its policies for the information society, for research and technology development, for social solidarity and regional regeneration, and above all for employment and growth.

Following the analysis of human resource issues across the Union, the White Paper then turned towards specifics, listing five proposals (mainly aimed at initial schooling or training) before noting that the Commission can only fund new initiatives by reallocating existing funds for education and training. Compared with the ambition of the White Paper's title, these measures seemed humble and conservative. The White Paper itself contended that the creation of the learning society 'entails radical change' (CEC 1995, 74). Yet the White Paper's proposals failed to live up to this challenge, a failure which was apparent on a number of levels. First, although the White Paper referred throughout to the need for learning to occur throughout the working life, its primary focus remained the initial education system. Of course schools and entry-level training can hardly remain unaffected by the requirements of a learning society (for example, through greater attention to the ability to learn independently and critically from a wide range of information sources, including the mass media), but what was proposed failed to address these issues. Further, although the White Paper paid due lip service to the need for personal development and social learning, and even active citizenship, as well as training, there was no sign of any concrete proposals in these areas. In fact, the White Paper simply replicated the boundary between vocational training and general education (at a time when firms like Ford, Michelin and Lucas were reporting the commercial benefits from blurring the boundaries between training and more general learning). Third, as Coffield has noted, the White Paper gave the pivotal role in constructing the learning society to the individual, downplaying the role of more collective arrangements in promoting or hindering

lifelong learning (Coffield previous chapter; as examples he cites CEC 1995, 48, 51). Finally, the fear of cultural uniformity was less than helpful, representing the implicit xenophobia that appears to continue to drive much of the EU's fear of Japan and the USA.

Within the Union, the White Paper's reception was lukewarm. Having politely but firmly reminded the Commission that this ground belonged to the member states, the Council of Education Ministers then proceeded to attack the White Paper for its vocational emphasis and instrumental approach, indicating that the Commission had fallen victim to 'an Enlightenment view of social change, in which excessive hopes are placed in knowledge as an end in itself'. In the Ministers' view, the Commission's linear view of the relationship between learning and economic growth had led it to focus overmuch on globalisation and the new technologies, thus ignoring

> *significant demographic changes, the confrontation of cultures, environmental issues, threats to the ways we live together in democracy, and the serious problem of social marginalization, which is largely the result of the divide in terms of knowledge and the use of capacities to master it* (Official Journal, 6 July 1996, 2).

Again in measured terms, the Ministers noted that it was apparently necessary to restate the Treaty's clear declarations on national sovereignty in this area, as well as on the principle of subsidiarity. They then reminded the Commission that the same problems were being debated, from perspectives which embraced cultural and 'purely educational' as well as economic issues, in the Council of Europe, UNESCO and the OECD (the Ministers did not see fit to labour the point that these transnational bodies, unlike the EU, may not make decisions that bind their members). Essentially, the Council gave a clear indication that it did not intend to take the White Paper further.

The Committee of the Regions was not quite so negative. Representing regional and local levels of government, CoR expressed similar views to those of the Council on what it saw as the Commission's disregard for the principle of subsidiarity, adding that 'the objective of the EU is not to set up a European Planning Authority for training and education'; it also took issue with the Commission's narrow conception of education and training. Unlike the Council, which had found little to welcome in the five objectives listed in the White Paper, CoR expressed guarded interest in all five; thus, it believed that the idea of the 'second chance school' for young people was inadequate in the context of a 'continuous lifelong learning approach'; it reminded the Commission of the importance of lesser-used minority and regional languages; and pointed out that encouraging enterprises to invest more in training was a matter for member states (*Official Journal*, 24 June 1996, 19-20). It concluded with a call for education and training to promote mutual understanding and tolerance, and foster 'participation in the democratic decision-making process' - issues which the White Paper had not addressed (*Official Journal*, 24 June 1996, 21).

Was this lukewarm reception justified? Certainly, the White Paper was a rather uneven document. On the down side, it was dominated by old agendas for action. It aimed at old targets, trying to encourage a sharp growth in Union-wide labour markets. It used old weapons such as student mobility. Yet as we shall see, labour market researchers have repeatedly shown that transnational labour migration is a phenomenon of the relatively unskilled or takes place within international firms; in either case, student mobility schemes are

largely irrelevant. Moreover, student mobility systematically excludes a range of groups, including most adult students and virtually all those that suffer from social exclusion (like the unemployed and single parents). It was widely criticised during the consultation process for its lack of vision, for its focus on the schooling process, and above all its emphasis upon continuing training as the major form of lifelong learning. Such criticisms were common not only among the professional adult education community (e.g. Deutscher Volkshochschul-verband 1996), but also as we have seen within the Union's own institutions.

Nevertheless, the White Paper did restate the far-reaching diagnosis of Europe's human resources challenge. It also took it for granted that the idea of a learning society now commands widespread support. Overall, though, like the discussion documents which had preceded the 1992 Treaty and the Green Paper on the European dimension in education which followed it, the 1995 White Paper was essentially a conservative document. In this, it contrasted with the European Year of Lifelong Learning, in which the Commission showed a willingness to take risks and support demonstration projects that raised important questions about the nature and direction of the Learning Society.

Labour mobility: what was new after 1992?

One view of the EU's embrace of the learning society concept is that it represents an attempt to overcome a policy blockage. In a number of respects, the Union has found that its education and training policies are at an impasse. This section considers one example, asking how far the Union has been justified in directing its education and training policies towards the goal of a single market for qualified labour. This goal has determined much of the Union's policy effort since the late 1970s: as well as the mobility programmes for students and trainees, it has shaped the early attempts at comparing vocational qualifications across member states, as well as the late 1980s legislation on the mutual recognition of degrees and professional qualifications. Freedom for workers to move, according to the Commission, would contribute towards greater economic competitiveness and also reduce disparities between the different regions and member states. Free movement across borders would also be a tangible benefit for workers, helping make the common market a reality for the ordinary citizen. This underlying analysis, and the overarching goal of promoting mobility as a means of promoting competitiveness, continued to underpin the action programmes of the 1980s, which used student or trainee mobility as a mechanism to allow Europe's skilled and professional workers of the future to gain experience of studying and working abroad.

In fact, strengthening the single market for labour has become a policy objective in its own right. The notion of 'an open European vocational training and vocational qualifications area' was listed among the common framework of objectives for the newly-created LEONARDO programme in 1994 (*Official Journal*, 29 December 1994, 12). Improvements in labour mobility were among the main themes of the Union's Second Social Action Programme, which was to cover the period 1995-1997. In 1996, Commissioner Cresson even argued that

> *one of the causes of this European sickness that is intractable unemployment is the fragmentation of the European labour market, in complete contrast with the situation in the United States* (Cresson 1996).

A 1996 Green Paper spoke of the 'absurd' snags facing trainees and students wishing to study in another member state, and proposed a series of measures designed to help create 'a real European area of qualifications' (CEC 1996, 2).

Actually, the effect of the mutual recognition Directives is at first sight rather puzzling. According to details published by the Commission, between 1991 and 1994 some 11,000 people throughout the EU applied successfully to have their diplomas or degrees recognised by another member state than their own - something which, at the time, the Commission's press service claimed as a triumph for the 1989 Directive. Of these, though, some 6,000 - well over half - entered the UK (*Frontier-free Europe*, 4, 1996, 3). So far, so peculiar. What was in fact happening, however, was not at all odd: the largest single number of entrants to posts in the UK were 1,674 graduates and diplomats from the Republic of Ireland, four-fifths of whom were school-teachers (*Irish Times*, 22 February 1996). In other words, to a considerable extent the 1989 Directive had simply institutionalised, and the EU had recorded, a pattern of movement which already existed. Is this representative of the wider European labour market, and what are the prospects for greater genuine movement in the future?

On the whole, it appears that there has been remarkably little cross-border traffic in human resources within the EU. Moreover, the vast majority of migrants inside Europe have been, not those who have craft or professional or managerial qualifications, but those who have relatively low skills levels. In short, it would seem that the goal of increased labour mobility has not been achieved. Quite the reverse: the fall in demand for unqualified labour has been so powerful that internal migration inside the Union, far from rising since the 1970s, has actually fallen. This judgement may seem surprising, but it is based on a range of evidence about movement within the single market.

First, the numbers of EU migrants within most of the member states has fallen since the mid-1970s (see Table Three). The reason is simple: the rise in unemployment from the early 1970s was associated with diminished opportunities for unskilled labour. At the same time, economic growth in Spain, Italy and subsequently Ireland have reduced the income differentials between richer and poorer nations within the EU, so that the incentive to move is smaller; greater affluence has also led to smaller family sizes, reducing the overall supply of young migrants.

Second, those who move appear to come from the traditional labour suppliers. The most mobile peoples by far appear to be the Irish, followed by the Portuguese. Over 13% of all Irish citizens living in the EU in 1992 lived outside the Irish Republic, while over 8% of Portuguese citizens in the EU lived outside Portugal. The Greeks and Luxembourgeois follow some way behind, and the other nations dwell almost entirely in their home country. Moreover, migrants within the EU are still largely heading for traditional destinations, taking well-trodden pathways. Thus if we take the 536,000 Irish citizens living elsewhere in the EU in 1992, it turns out that almost 95% of them live in the United Kingdom, a pattern which has not changed noticeably since the early 1970s. This suggests that the EU's impact upon labour mobility has been strictly limited. It also suggests that it is the poorer countries - with the exception of Luxembourg - that have supplied most of the migrants.

Table Three: Number of employees from other EU member states, 1975 and 1988 (Werner, in Marsden, ed., 1994, 42)		
Country	1975 [i]	1988 [ii]
Belgium	174,000	130,000
Denmark	14,000	13,000
F.R. Germany	849,000	484,000
Greece	5,000	7,000
Spain	31,000	28,000
France	1,045,000	569,000
Ireland	13,000	20,000
UK	347,000	345,000
Luxembourg	49,000	64,000
Netherlands	59,000	85,000
Portugal	7,000	10,000

So far, then, the single market has not created cross-border flows of labour on a grand scale. High unemployment has reduced the traditionally high level of movement among the inexperienced or unskilled. Skilled and qualified labour, and more experienced labour, are generally less mobile than qualified labour, partly because those who are best qualified tend to find a relatively comfortable position at home so that the benefits of migration do not outweigh the risks; and also because many of their skills are valued precisely because of their grasp of local and context-bound knowledge.

Has the Union simply got it wrong, then? Certainly there is no shortage of evidence to show that the Commission and Council, and above all perhaps Delors, believed that the freedom to move was a fundamental element of the single market. In its Memorandum on Higher Education, the Commission's Task Force on Human Resources argued that

> *The free movement of persons and the recognition of qualifications for professional purposes create, in effect, a single labour market for the categories of persons concerned* (CEC 1991, 7).

In fact, they did no such thing. In general, the European labour market remains heavily segmented along national lines.

This is not to say that nothing has happened. On the contrary, the organisation of the European economy has changed, but in different ways from those expected by the politicians. One result of the single market that was not predicted by the Delors Commission was a massive influx of capital deriving from outside the EU entirely. Much of this capital is American, though the Asian-Pacific region has also been an increasingly significant source, and one readily latched onto by journalists. The Republic of Ireland - an EU success story, and a nation that is characteristically open to inward investors - offers a telling example. The proportion of the manufacturing workforce employed in firms whose ownership lay in other EU member states actually fell between 1973, when it was 24.5%, and 1995, when it had reached under 17%. Meanwhile, the number working in non-EU firms rose from 9% of the manufacturing workforce in 1973 to 28% in 1995 (*Irish Times*, 25 November 1996).

In summary, then, the Union's policies appear to have lost contact with the development of the labour market in Europe. This is not to suggest that labour markets in the EU have not become Europeanised; rather, the evidence is that there has been a partial internationalisation of the labour market, in which after a decade or more of regulation the EU remains a relatively minor player. What has not happened is the generation of a significant level of labour mobility within the EU; people move around to find or change their work, but they do so less than they did before the single market programme started; most of them are unskilled, and they mostly migrate along well-trodden pathways. The Union's initiatives have been largely irrelevant in respect of more significant developments - the internationalisation of capital, the development of locally-based management and investment consultancies, and the growth of short-term business travel, to take only three examples. Within the EU, labour markets remain stubbornly segmented, usually along regional or national lines. This suggests that a large part of the EU's education and training policy has been developed, at best, on shaky foundations. It was designed to support and promote the demand for a single European area of education and training and qualifications; yet the demand which exists, despite the achievement of the single market, is remarkably limited. However, this is not the only area where the Union's education and training policies have reached an impasse. It faces similar blockages in respect of its student mobility programmes and its distance learning initiatives, and for similar reasons. Only by emphasising the European level of action in enhancing competitiveness can the Union fully exploit, let alone overstep, the limits to its policy competences. Yet in the context of an accelerating and turbulent process of globalisation, it is by no means clear that the European level of action is an effective or meaningful means of achieving the goal of enhanced competitiveness; if competitiveness is the game, then the rules continue to favour nation states; as a number of Pacific Rim nations demonstrate, the economies of scale may be countered by the virtues of social capital. Thus the apparent stagnation of the European labour market represents the tip of a much larger iceberg, which the Union now appears to be confronting across a range of policy areas.

Conclusion

Between 1992 and 1997, the policy debate over education and training acquired a new momentum within the Union. In part, it benefited from the impetus that it had acquired during the move towards the single market, when the Delors Commission had started to press for education and training to occupy a more central place in the Union's preoccupations. By continuing to couple its far-reaching analysis of the present education and training system with the discourse of a crisis of competitiveness, the Union's institutions gave their relatively modest proposals an air of obviousness, even of historic inevitability. Where more fundamental change was desired, the Union preferred quietly to redirect resources within its own programmes than to risk the chance of reversal in any public debate over the limits to its competences. By 1997, though, the tensions within this position were increasingly apparent.

Yet much remains unchanged, and frequently unchallenged. Above all, the Union's modus operandi has changed little since the mid-1980s. Although the range of eligible institutions has widened substantially, the action programmes are essentially incentive schemes which rest on voluntary participation in transnational partnerships of organisations. This modus operandi has a number of virtues from the Union's perspective. One is that it allows the Union's institutions to build up relationships directly with actors on the ground, rather than filtering decisions through the member states. Another is that any such partnership has active assent from all the

partners; there are no conscripts, only willing volunteers. Frequently, the Commission gave the impression that the activities were themselves sufficient justification for their existence; for all its insistence on evaluation by others, it has rarely learned systematically from its own experiences. This impression is misleading, though. The Commission had learned how to work with educational and training institutions and systems with a minimum of involvement by the member states; and how to push forward the boundaries of its competence on an incremental, step-by-step basis.

Second, competitiveness remained throughout the central theme in the EU's discourse of crisis. Speaking at the launch of the SOCRATES programme in November 1995, for example, Commissioner Edith Cresson emphasised the contribution of education as a 'key factor' in European competitiveness:

> *Non-tangible investment, that is notably education investment, is clearly felt to be a priority at Union level: it has become obvious that it is through the quality of its human resources that Europe can face up to global competition while maintaining its own distinctive social model* (Cresson 1995).

Persuasive though the competitiveness agenda may be among politicians, educationalists have tended to reject this narrow focus. Despite its active involvement in the SOCRATES programme, the German adult education association has attacked the fact that 'in the White Paper, general continuing education is primarily justified on grounds of its occupational benefits for individuals and its economic benefits for society' (Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband 1996). As we have already seen, the Council is also willing to deploy this argument in opposition to the Commission White Paper. Yet, such internal positioning aside, the focus on competitiveness is highly serviceable for the Union's political leaders. Quite apart from any other consideration, economic growth is widely accepted by the member states as a legitimate goal of Union activity, and any policy proposal which complements this aim is likely to win a hearing. Hence the merit of introducing a wide-ranging, even visionary analysis of the potential role of education and training in overcoming the present crisis of competitiveness.

For all the ambition of its analysis, the Union is still bound by the terms of the Treaty. Achieving the necessary compromises on any Treaty revision was difficult enough with 12 member states; in an enlarged Union it is difficult to see how there can be any coalition sufficiently strong to widen the Union's legal competences in respect of education and training. The suggestion in this paper is that when the scope of the Union's policy thinking exceeds the limits of its Treaty competences, it often seeks to pursue the implications through its own more important areas of activity - the Structural Funds or the Research and Technology Development programmes - than to engage in open conflict with the Council and the member states. In so far as the objective of a learning society is being pursued, the Union has taken it up in these other, larger and less constrained programmes.

Superficially, then, it seems that it is the need to pursue the competitiveness agenda aggressively that is leading the EU to offer a radical prescription for Europe's human resources deficit, and it is only the obduracy of the member states that has stunted its policies and programmes. However, I am arguing that the reverse is equally plausible: it is precisely the Union's limited sovereignty in this area that has allowed it to roam freely outside the well-cultivated policy parkland, and surrender to the lure of the learning society. It is relatively easy for the Commission's Study Group on Education and Training to favour a radical agenda;

unlike the member states, there is little chance that the Commission - let alone the Study Group - will be charged with executing its policies. There is little evidence that the Union has an agenda for the learning society beyond a somewhat conventional picture of lifelong learning supplemented by technology. In this respect, the Union has opted as in so many other areas for a seemingly value-free, highly technologised solution to its extreme policy difficulties (Szerszynski, Lash and Wynne 1996, 4-5). This helps explain why the Union's radical diagnosis has in practice led to somewhat modest policy proposals, why its idea of the learning society is poorly thought out, and why its content is so limited.

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CHAPTER SIX

RELATIONS BETWEEN HUMAN AND SOCIAL CAPITAL

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Introduction: The Investment Metaphor

In this paper I want to explore the relationship between the well-known notion of human capital, and the more recent and less clearly defined notion of social capital. I do not seek to substitute the latter for the former, but by introducing it to the debate I aim to generate some broader reflections about how we conceptualise a learning society, and how we go about assessing progress towards that chimerical goal. The paper has three aims:

- to introduce the notion of social capital
- to explore its relationship to the notion of human capital
- to pose some questions about the implications for learning society research.

The investment metaphor

Education as an investment is a powerful metaphor, and one that in the current political climate operates in favour of education, but it is not without its problems. It was in the 1960s that Theodor Schultz and Gary Becker developed Adam Smith's original notion that investment in education and skill formation was as significant a factor in economic growth as investment in physical plant and equipment, and the phrase human capital was born. It has been immensely influential at all sorts of levels, including that of political imagery.

As James Coleman, whom I shall cite later as one of the originators of the term social capital, observes:

> *Probably the most important and most original development in the economics of education in the past 30 years has been the idea that the concept of physical capital as embodied in tools, machines and other productive equipment can be extended to include human capital as well. Just as physical capital is created by changes in materials to form tools that facilitate production, human capital is created by changes in persons that bring about skills and capabilities that make them able to act in new ways. (Coleman 1988 p100).*

The concept of human capital, according to Woodhall, "refers to the fact that human beings invest in themselves, by means of education, training or other activities, which raises their future income by increasing their lifetime earnings". (Woodhall 1995 p24). The investment need not be made by the individuals in whom it is made - it may be their employers, their parents, or the state. The key components of the conventional definition are that resources are committed to education and training, which are almost always measured in terms of the amount of time spent or the qualifications gained, and that returns are measured using individual incomes.

Since Becker and Schultz, huge amounts of research and analysis has been built on the notion of human capital (see e.g. Carnoy 1995 passim). This has not been uncontested, methodologically or politically. There are trenchant critics of the 'new vocationalism', as the dominant ethos of current policy has been dubbed, who attribute its rise in part to the human capital approach. But the opposition arguments fall into two rather contradictory camps, which are not always distinguished: on the one hand against the *subordination* of more liberal forms of education to training geared to business needs, and on the other hand attacking the *inefficiency* of current provision even from the economistic point of view. The subordination view challenges the values of new vocationalism and rejects the view that there should be

closer links between education and the labour market; the inefficiency view broadly accepts the goals but denies that current strategies are the right ones for achieving them. One of the reasons for the dominance of a rather narrow human capital approach is the frequent failure of these schools to articulate their position fully.

A further reason for the spread of human capital as an analytical construct is that it lent itself well to the application of sophisticated modelling and statistical techniques. Large banks of data became available which included information on length of schooling and qualifications achieved, on the one hand, and income and occupational levels on the other . This offered a rich vein for the emerging technical tools of the econometricians and of quantitative analysts of social mobility (for a highly sophisticated example, see Erikson and Goldthorpe 1992). It became possible to measure all kinds of relationships between schooling and subsequent economic success, pointing almost unanimously to the fact that the more education someone had the more likely they were to earn above the national average (Ball 1991). At the macro level the same appeared to be true, with countries whose populations stayed in school or college longer out-performing those, such as Britain, where large numbers left school without any qualifications and where relatively small proportions of the relevant age cohort continued into higher education.

All of this seemed to point in one direction only: individuals, and societies, that did not invest heavily in education and training were consigning themselves to economic underachievement, or at least increasing the probabilities that they would lose out in the competitive race for position, power or material well-being.

As a general proposition I am as much in favour of investment as the next person, but there are a number of questions to be asked which should discourage us from over-simple propositions to the effect that learning pays. Who pays for the education and training? Who benefits? What is the investment actually in? How do we assess it, quantitatively and qualitatively? Where there is physical investment one can see the result, though this is true to a greatly diminished extent today when most investment is in bits of paper or rather in electronic messages which whiz round the world creating excess liquidity in the capital markets, massive profits for their manipulators but arguably not much else.

In the case of human capital, it is knowledge and skills which are being created. However, measurement of human capital has always been a problem. Highly sophisticated econometric analyses of the effect of human capital investment are often founded on the assumption that human capital can be measured simply by the number of years schooling. More plausible is the use of qualifications as a measure but here again there are serious question marks against the intrinsic validity of such measures (see, e.g., Mulligan & Sala-i-Martin 1995).

The assumptions on which towers of statistical analysis about the relationship between education and economic success are built are often heroic to the point of stupidity - I think of them as a kind of intellectual version of the charge of the light brigade, except that our intellectual heroes, happily, survive to tell another tale. Given the power of human capital, in theory and practice, there is a remarkable dearth of serious instruments by which the nature and quality of the investment is measured.

So much for the input side - years and paper. Now let us turn to the output from the investment. Conventionally, and because the concept was developed in an economic school, the output from human capital investment is measured in terms of income for the individual, or productivity for the organisation or sector, the two of these occasionally being aggregated into economic performance at national level.

But things are actually more complicated. As Balogh and Streeten put it almost 25 years ago, in an article with the marvellous title of 'The Co-Efficient of Ignorance':

> *What a relief ...to be served by econometricians with an elegant model, and how convenient to elevate a statistical residual to the engine of development, thus converting ignorance into 'knowledge'. Instead of having to specify which type of education combined with what other measures [e.g. better methods of cultivation] and complemented by what other policies [e.g. land reform, reform of the credit system] one item is singled out....But the wrong kind of education, or the right kind unaccompanied by the required complementary actions, can check or reverse the process of development.....Aggregation of all 'investment in human capital' and its separation from 'investment in physical capital' not only obscures the complementary nature of the two, but also* ***serves as an intellectual and moral escape mechanism from unpleasant social and political difficulties.***[1] *(my stress)*

This comment was made in relation to developing countries some 25 years ago. But its warning against simplistic notions of investment and payback is valid for us today, in Scotland, in UK and in Europe - wherever the rhetoric of investment in skills is being uncritically applied. Amongst other things, we are in danger of shifting all the blame for economic failure onto the backs of the unskilled - a new 'British worker problem', as Theo Nichols has termed it.

I hope that I have not been unfair to the human capital approach. That is a genuine wish, since I believe that it has brought many insights into educational policy thinking, and generated many awkward and important questions. Many of the quasi-moral objections to it were anticipated by its arch-priest, Theodor Schultz:

> *Our values and beliefs inhibit us from looking upon human beings as capital goods, except in slavery, and this we abhor. We are not unaffected by the long struggle to rid society of indentured service, and to evolve political and legal institutions to keep men free from bondage. These are achievements that we prize highly. Hence, to treat human beings as a wealth that can be augmented by investment runs counter to deeply-held values.*

Nevertheless, there are serious objections. One is the intrinsic merit of education as a consumption good, to persist for a moment longer with the economic vocabulary. People do, and should, value learning as something which they enjoy, even if the value is consumed once the act of learning is over. Very obviously, people buy books, CDs, computers and the other accoutrements which designate the professional learner; and, happily for me and my colleagues in continuing education, they still spend money on traditional courses and appear to enjoy them. (There is, incidentally, another sense in which learning confronts, and even undermines the conventional notion of consumerism. It replaces the consecration of time to spending money. If you're busy studying, you are not out spending money. It could indeed be that the

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[1] I owe this quote to the most stimulating piece by Richard Smethurst in the December 1995 issue of the RSA journal, 'Education: a public or private good?'

prevalence of study circles in Scandinavian society is precisely because alternative forms of consumption, like the public consumption of alcohol, are so prohibitively expensive; however that is a line of discussion for which I don't have time here - to be pursued in the pub, perhaps.)

The second major objection is more of a tactical one, but none the less important for that. The more the language of investment dominates, the more it is accepted not only as rational in its own terms but as the only language, the more difficult it will be for learning activities which cannot show a visible return, and especially a quick return, to justify themselves. This is a serious problem in an accountancy-driven society. It incidentally adds a question mark against the otherwise very interesting objective - one of five - of the EU's Year of Lifelong Learning, which is to make investment in human resources as regular a feature of company balance accounts as investment in physical assets.

These objections notwithstanding, human capital is an immensely powerful analytical notion. But it is time to ask whether it may not have achieved, at least implicitly, a dominance which partially undermines its contemporary utility. The narrowness of its measures, of input and output, arguably have a distorting effect on real investment patterns. In particular, it concentrates on individuals, since it is individuals who spend the years in school and to whom qualifications are awarded, and to the extent that it does this it ignores the wider social context within which much learning takes place, and the relationships - personal, and institutional - which actually constitute the vehicles or channels through which learning takes place.

Social Capital: Three Conceptions

I shall give some definition to the notion of social capital by reference to three prominent scholars. The first two, Robert Putnam and Francis Fukuyama, are political scientists, the third, James Coleman, a sociologist. It is not their disciplinary identities which are important, but the communalities and contrasts in their approaches.

Putnam defines social capital as "the features of social life - networks, norms and trust - that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives." (Putnam 1996 p66; for a fuller account see Putnam 1995). This is indeed broad, but he proceeds quickly to give this empirical substance, drawing on extensive time-budget surveys of Americans in succeeding decades: 1965, 1975 and 1985. Most forms of collective political participation, both in the direct sense of political such as working for a political party or more broadly such as attending meetings about town or school affairs, have declined by between a quarter and a half. These findings are complemented by opinion surveys which show a decline in the last two decades of social trust. Only nationality groups and hobby clubs run counter to this trend.

Putnam examines possible causes for this civic disengagement. He looks, for a possible explanation, to such items as longer working hours, participation by women in the workforce, or the decline of traditional communities through slum clearances. The main conclusion is that the "culprit" is television. He contrasts newspaper reading, which is positively associated with participation, and television, where "each hour spent viewing is associated with less social trust and less group membership." Television privatises leisure time, and therefore erodes

social capital. He finds, surprisingly, that although participation is usually associated with higher levels of education, and educational levels have increased, the decline in social capital has affected all levels:

> *The mysterious disengagement of the last quarter century seems to have afflicted all educational strata in our society, whether they have graduate education or did not finish high school. (1996, p67).*

On this he concludes that the rise in education has mitigated what would otherwise have been an even steeper decline, but it has not succeeded in reversing it.

Putnam's approach is overtly normative. His measures may seem to be excessively encompassing - how solid is a type of capital of which 'social visiting' is a basic component? But his deployment of empirical data is substantial and compelling as an identification of a significant trend. The failure of rising educational levels to halt the decline in social capital is a powerful indication of a rather different form of instrumentalism than that which is usually pointed to. Moreover, the differentiation, crude as it is, between different types of mass media - some as positively informative, and encouraging participation, others as sapping social energies - opens up important avenues for exploration in relation to the information society.

Fukuyama's book on *Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity* has a global scope, as he sets out to explain national differences in economic performance by reference to cultural factors, and especially the relationship between the development of large or small scale enterprises on the one hand and the family or other relationships which characterise society on the other. He defines social capital as follows:

> *a capability that arises from the prevalence of trust in a society or in certain parts of it. It can be embodied in the smallest and most basic social group, the family, as well as the largest of all groups, the nation, and in all other groups in between. Social capital differs from other forms of human capital insofar as it is usually created and transmitted through cultural mechanisms like religion, tradition, or historical habit. (1995 p26).*

Fukuyama contrasts the development of trust, and of social capital, with standard economic arguments about self-interest:

> *While contract and self-interest are important sources of association, the most effective organisations are based on communities of shared ethical values. These communities do not require extensive contract and legal regulation of their relations because prior moral consensus gives members of the group a basis for mutual trust. (ibid.)*

And he draws a corresponding contrast between human and social capital:

> *The social capital needed to create this kind of moral community cannot be acquired, as in the case of other forms of human capital, through a rational investment decision. That is, an individual can decide to 'invest' in conventional human capital like a college education, or training to become a machinist or computer programmer, simply by going to the appropriate school. Acquisition of social capital, by contrast, requires habituation to the moral norms of a community and, in its context, the acquisition of virtues like loyalty, honesty and dependability.....Social capital cannot be acquired simply by individuals acting on their own. It is based on the prevalence of social rather than individual virtues. (ibid. pp26-7)*

It is hard to extract from Fukuyama's text specific measures which might be used as Putnam has done for assessing growth and decline in social capital. This does not necessarily detract from the argument; I would certainly not wish to argue that only those theses which include 'hard' or quantitative measures have merit. To some extent, Fukuyama seems to want to establish the centrality of the notion of 'trust' by attributing to it a whole range of other social phenomena. However the general thesis is of evident relevance to any debate on the relationship between education, economic performance and social success, and the brief passage quoted goes to the heart of the difference between human and social capital.

James Coleman can probably claim to be the originator of the term, so we can turn to him with some expectation of a starting definition. He acknowledges the diversity, if not the diffuseness, of the concept:

> *Social capital is defined by its function. It is not a single entity but a variety of different entities, with two elements in common: they all consist of some aspect of social structures, and they facilitate certain actions of actors - whether persons or corporate actors - within the structure. (1988 p98).*

So far so vague, but Coleman goes on to specify three forms of social capital. The first deals with the level of trust which exists in the social environment and the actual extent of obligations held. Social capital is high where people trust each other, and where this trust is exercised by the mutual acceptance of obligations. Coleman gives the example of Egyptian markets where neighbouring traders help each other by bringing commissions or providing finance without entering into legal or financial contracts. The second form concerns information channels; here Coleman cites a university as a place where social capital is maintained by colleagues supplying each other with ideas and information (he does not pause to reflect how far this has declined recently - nor how far other organisations maybe now approximate more closely than universities to this idea of a learning organisation). Thirdly, norms and sanctions constitute social capital where they encourage or constrain people to work for a common good, forgoing immediate self-interest.

Coleman then turns to examining the effect of social capital in creating human capital, in the family and in the community. Family background plays a large part in educational achievement (Coleman concentrates on schooling), first through financial capital - the wealth which provides school materials, a place to study at home and so on; and secondly through human capital, measured approximately by parental levels of education and influencing the child's cognitive environment. To this Coleman adds social capital, defined in terms of the relationship between parents and children. By this he means not so much the emotional relationship as the amount of effort parents put directly into their children's learning, and he cites John Stuart Mill's father and Asian immigrant families in the US as examples of creators of high social capital. On this reckoning, one could have high levels of financial and human capital but low social capital - for instance in a high-status dual-earning household where both parents were too busy with their careers to provide direct support for the children, though presumably direct parental effort can be substituted for to some extent by relatives or paid help.

At the community level, social capital involves the extent to which parents reinforce each other's norms, and the closeness of parents' relations with community institutions. Where households move frequently, and little social interchange occurs between the adult members of

the community, social capital is likely to be low. This may occur even where financial and human capital levels are high (which Coleman uses to explain why some Catholic schools in poor but relatively stable neighbourhoods out-perform many private schools : "the choice of private school for many of these parents is an individualistic one, and, although they back their children with extensive human capital, they send their children to school denuded of social capital." (1988 p114).

Coleman goes on to test out this approach with some empirical data, using a random sample of 4000 school students and looking at variables such as the following: socio-economic status, number of siblings, number of changes in school due to family residential moves, mother's work patterns, frequency of discussion with parents about personal matters and presence of both parents in the household. This is not the place to examine the results, nor even the methodology in detail. But it is interesting to note how complex the methodology becomes, for instance in interpreting high sibling numbers as denoting a probably decrease in social capital (because the parents will have mathematically less time with each child). And it would be particularly interesting to explore the impact of domestic technology - especially Putnam's villain, the television - on parent-child interactions as a form of social capital.

To summarise: all three are quite straightforward about the normative content of their conceptualisations. The emphasis may be different, with Fukuyama seeking the secret of the creation of prosperity, Putnam to regenerate political health and Coleman to explain social patterns, but they all give primacy to the role of norms. Secondly, there is a clear commitment to collective values. This may appear to sit oddly with Fukuyama's previously proclaimed *End of History* ideology of the triumph of capitalism over alternative ideologies(to my mind an infinitely inferior thesis to that put forward in *Trust*), but he is seeking here to establish some kind of social base for that liberal capitalism. For the others, it is a self-evident truth that social relations are in themselves a good. Coleman, for example, does not pause to consider whether the imposition of norms by the Catholic church, aligning itself with parents to achieve educational success, might through its authoritarianism undermine non-conforming forms of social capital. Personally I have no trouble in endorsing this kind of communitarian stance at a general level, but the complexity of how and how tightly norms are enforced needs to be recognised.

Thirdly, and crucially for the purposes of this paper, the three call into question the value of human capital when it is divorced from wider social relations. All challenge the individualism and the assumed rationality of orthodox human capital approaches. Coleman draws on economistic notions of utility-maximisation as well as on sociological models of socialised behaviour, but he concludes by identifying social capital as a public good, and pointing out that the social structural conditions that overcome the problems of supplying it as a public good - strong families and strong communities - are less in evidence than in the past, and we can therefore expect a decline in human capital as a consequence. Finally, Putnam and Coleman offer rather different sets of specific measures by which the accumulation or erosion of social capital can be assessed. These certainly have their weaknesses, but they make a striking contrast to the narrowness of the assumptions made in most human capital computations.

Human And Social Capital: Twins, Siblings Or Enemies?

In this section I want to explore the relationship(s) between human and social capital. This means pointing to differences; however, the purpose is not to substitute social capital for human capital, as some kind of friendlier, more collective form of investment. To argue along these lines would be to fall into the trap of counterproductive dichotomising. Nor, incidentally, does the whole argument in favour of bringing social capital into the equation avoid issues about power and conflict; these remain to be worked through.

Here is an initial summary of the differences from the discussion thus far:

- human capital focuses on the individual agent, social capital on networks and relationships.
- human capital assumes economic rationality, and transparency of information; social capital assumes that most things are seen through lenses of values and norms which are socially shaped.
- human capital measures inputs by reference to duration of education or numbers of qualification; social capital by the strength of mutual obligation and civic engagement.
- human capital measures output in terms of individual income or productivity levels; social capital in terms of quality of life.

I want to argue that the relationship between human and social capital is not necessarily an antagonistic one, conceptually or practically. But let me give this crucial point an edge by asking: in what ways is it conceivable that we might have an expansion of human capital, as conventionally measured, and a decline in social capital? Coleman's example is one of highly educated parents failing to convert their human capital into social capital by not building it into their parental relationships. This is a matter of neglect, rather than active erosion of social capital. Another example, closer to the current theme, might be called the Walkman nightmare version of the learning society. This is the dystopia of long series of individuals permanently plugged into their personal training programmes, but with no sense of the value of learning as something shared with others, including friends, colleagues, families or their wider social milieu. Human capital rises, as they are guided to higher and higher qualifications, but at the expense of the means of personal communication and relationships. To some extent this is satire, but if human capital accumulation does occur independently of such social contexts it will be, at best, of very limited social and economic value, and it may well be actively erosive.

In this case, the relationships are personal ones. But it would be wrong, I think, to conceive of social capital as only about maintaining these kind of relationships, crucial thought they are to many forms of effective learning. A second type of relationship is the institutional, the way in which different institutions (educational and non-educational) communicate, collaborate or compete with each other (healthy competition being as much of a valid relationship as fruitful collaboration). There is much food for thought here, analytically and politically: how do we construct or maintain institutional relationships which support rather than impede learning? But there is a third form of relationship, which I think illustrates well the difference and the complementarity of human and social capital.

The debate about specialised versus general knowledge is a long-running one. In one form it runs parallel with the history of human capital theory, since one of the early theoretical distinctions was between general and specific skills, and who should be expected to invest in these. But I am using it here in a wider sense. There have been many arguments, notably in relation to English higher education, about undue specialisation. I would concur with much of the critique. But it has often taken the form of a rather unreflecting critique of specialisation *per se*, leading to another counterproductive dichotomy. Specialist skills and knowledge are needed; the issue is the balance between them and wider forms of knowledge. My point, though, is not just that a balance is needed. It is that the claim of more generalist knowledge must be not just that it covers more areas, for this would leave it open to the jibe that a generalist is someone who knows less and less about more and more. Its essential value depends on the ability it confers to see the relationships between these different areas. Without that relational knowledge, generalism loses its cutting edge.

How does this fit with the point that human capital theory has already made a distinction between general and specific skills? The short answer is that 'general' in this sense is equivalent to transferable; they are the skills which are usable in several contexts, but may still be highly specialised. But social capital cannot, I think, be characterised as the meta-knowledge which enables an individual awareness of the relationships between other skills and knowledges to emerge. It refers rather to the ways in which diverse areas of knowledge, or skills, are pieced together by more than one person, not necessarily operating at the same level but complementing each other at least to the extent which makes forms of learning possible which would not otherwise have been so. For this to work, it requires norms to operate, implicitly or explicitly.

Conclusion: Some Questions

I can already hear the razors being sharpened at the woolliness of some of the social capital terminology, especially the last two measures listed above: mutual obligation and quality of life. That is fair enough; they need challenging if we are not to descend into a muggy cosiness. But it gives me a chance to formulate the grandmother's footsteps paradox of performance measurement, and I take as an example the second of Coleman's illustrations of social capital: information channels within universities. The cynic in me suggests the following as a measure of this: how many pieces of academic information (i.e. not bureaucratic requirements) - e.g. articles which might be relevant to a colleague's research - are transmitted or notified between colleagues who are not part of a common research team but who might nevertheless reasonably be expected to know what would be relevant to each other.? I don't know - I hope quite a few. It should be high, if claims to an academic community with good information channels are to be justified. But the paradox is this: that if this were made into a measure of human capital, and performance was being judged on this basis, its validity would instantly vanish - just as a step forward that is seen in the grandmother's footsteps game is immediately cancelled. However, the task is to develop measures - and policies - which will stand up. This is the challenge which the human capital approach has met forcefully and head-on, with its calculations of rates of return to education at all levels and in all countries, best known in the corporate work of the World Bank.

The first set of questions is therefore about measurement. What kind of constructive critique can be mounted of the measures used in respect of human capital? And how do we pursue the development of adequate measures for assessing the accumulation or erosion of social capital?

The second set of questions concerns the nature of the relationships which form the essence of the social capital concept, and have more of a practical or policy-related character. I have suggested that attention here might concentrate on three areas. The first is the personal: what are the kinds of context and culture which promote communication and mutual learning as part of the fabric of everyday life? This is surely at the heart of a learning society. Secondly, what kinds of institutional relationship are most supportive of learning? These will definitely be plural; in some instances, collaboration may be the appropriate mode of co-existence, but in others competitive relationships will be the ones which most actively foster learning. The need is to sort out which is which, and what are the most fruitful forms of competition and collaboration. Finally, I have suggested that relationships between different knowledge areas merit further reflection. Rather than accumulating certificates as individual pieces of evidence of human capital, we need to ask what the balance is across the portfolios held by individuals and by groups, so that the awards are related to the social units which are to deploy the knowledge and skills.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

ADULT PARTICIPATION IN LEARNING: CAN WE CHANGE THE PATTERN?

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Everybody is talking about lifelong learning which is generally considered to be a very desirable thing. One TEC recently referred to: 'the startling congruity of Lifetime Learning perspectives emerging from diverse sources which indicates weighty support for the concept.' (Somerset TEC, 1996) However, does the concept amount to anything or is it just a fashionable and alliterative slogan?

The widespread use of the concept has, at the very least, succeeded in focusing minds on the issue in England and Wales. The three main political parties have all been considering forms of individual learning accounts so at least they recognise the need for a strategic and policy framework for lifelong learning. There are initiatives on widening participation underway in the further and higher education sectors and there is increased funding for colleges that attract students from particular post codes in Wales.

The HEFC has commissioned studies on the cost-effectiveness of providing for non traditional learners and the effectiveness of the HEFCE programmes on widening provision and liberal adult education. The council has also circulated proposals for a new funding mechanism that will provide additional weighting for mature students, those with non traditional entry qualifications and part-time students.

Many TECs are currently considering strategies for the development of a lifelong learning culture and the National Lottery Charity Boards fourth round will be open to bids from voluntary organisations. Themes under the New Opportunities, New Choices Programme include: opportunities for people of all ages to broaden their skills and enjoyment through lifelong learning and improved access to education and training for disabled people.

Adult learners' Week which receives government and European support continues to be very successful. This year 10,000 calls were received by the national telephone helpline, 46% of which were from unemployed people. A national helpline on learning opportunities is currently under consideration at the DFEE. The Government is piloting new arrangements for people to undertake employment related education and training either full- or part-time while receiving the Job Seekers Allowance. A new Learning Towns and Cities initiative has been started, supported by the DFEE.

These are all encouraging signs but are we anywhere nearer becoming a lifelong learning culture? For all the words spoken and written about lifelong learning, we are still light years away from achieving it. Let me just point out a few facts:

We are moving towards achievement of the National Targets at a snail's pace: the improvement in achievement of Lifetime Targets 1 and 2 between Autumn 1994 and autumn 1995 was less than 1%.

Qualification levels are lowest among one of the most rapidly growing clusters of the workforce - part-time workers.

A Gallup survey conducted for NIACE earlier this year indicated that about 60% of adults have not been engaged in any formal or informal learning activity during the last three years. The survey findings revealed a depressingly familiar picture:

* The highest participation rates were among the younger adult cohorts and those in socio-economic classes AB and C1; the lowest were among older adults and those in groups C2 (skilled manual) and DE (unskilled/unemployed).

* About 60% of those who left school at 18 were current or recent learners but only 20% of those who left school below 16 and 39% of those who left at age 16-17.

* Although the majority of current learners said they were likely to continue learning, 81% of those who had not engaged in learning since leaving school said they were unlikely to participate in the future. (Tuckett and Sargant, 1996)

Analysis of the Gallup findings led to the conclusion that:

> *the UK is increasingly two nations: one convinced of the value of learning, participating regularly and planning to do more; the other choosing not to join the learning society.*

The survey confirmed that the key factors involved in participation continue to be length of initial schooling, age and socio-economic status. Another key factor is prior participation: adults who have engaged in learning are always far more likely to continue than those who have not. Taken together the factors that influence participation suggest that participation in post compulsory learning is a continuing rather than a remedial or catching-up activity.

Determinants Of Participation

* LENGTH OF SCHOOLING

* EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

* CURRENT SOCIO-ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES

* CULTURAL FACTORS: WORK, SOCIAL AND FAMILY ENVIRONMENT

* PERCEPTION OF THE VALUE OF EDUCATION

* AWARENESS OF EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

* FAMILIARITY WITH EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES AND PROCESSES

* POSSESSION OF TIME AND AUTONOMY

* POSSESSION OF BASIC, SOCIAL AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS

* ABSENCE OF CONSTRAINTS SUCH AS LACK OF MONEY, TRANSPORT, CHILDCARE.

Some point to recent increases in participation rates as proof that we are making progress. But the statistics can be misleading and suggest more advances than have actually been made. For example, Labour Force surveys indicate gains in the number of employees being trained and

this is heralded as a move towards lifelong learning. However, there is no attempt to distinguish between the workers given minimal induction or health and safety training and those offered much longer, more sustained and in-depth development. A recent study using longitudinal data from the National Child Development Study (Blundell, Dearden and Meghir, 1996) reported the familiar finding that: 'more highly educated people have a greater probability of receiving employer-provided training and work-related training leading to a formal vocational qualification.'

Statistics from higher education also give a misleading picture. Although there have been increases in the participation of mature students, women and ethnic minority adults, the expansion has largely been in middle-class participation - in other words, more of the same.

Let us also consider the case of women. It is widely believed that because their numbers have increased dramatically in further and higher education and in the labour force, there is no longer a problem. Wrong! There are still substantial obstacles which prevent women disadvantaged by race, poverty or family situation from gaining access to any form of educational opportunity, particularly now that informal access points are dwindling. In addition, women still face discrimination in access to employer-provided training: the analysis of data from the Child Development Study found that in the last decade men 'have had a substantially higher probability than women of undertaking employer provided training and work-related training leading to a formal vocational qualification' (Blundell, Dearden and Meghir, 1996).

Some groups of men also miss out. Unemployed men and male manual workers are particularly under-represented across the range of post compulsory education and training opportunities, as are certain other groups:

* People with literacy and numeracy problems
* People without qualifications
* Ethnic and linguistic minorities
* Older adults (aged 55+)
* People with special needs and disabilities
* Ex offenders

In other words, those who ostensibly have the greatest need participate the least. Thus, as my colleague Tony Uden (1996) has pointed out, Lifelong Learning and Widening Participation are not the same thing and 'it is possible to increase participation without meaningfully widening it'. Although there have been some increases in participation, the overall profile of adult learners in all sectors remains largely unchanged. This is at odds with the somewhat complacent view that inequalities of access have been largely ironed out and it is certainly not conducive to the establishment of a lifelong learning culture.

Why Does This Pattern Persist?

In my opinion it is not at all surprising. Participation in education has to compete with paid and domestic work, family, friends, shopping, hobbies, sports, travel, holidays, TV, cinema, visits to the pub and other communal places and sleep. Therefore it has to be seen to have significant personal pay offs to justify expenditure of time, effort and money. It has to be

perceived as accessible, enjoyable and beneficial. Talking about lifelong learning and telling people they should be responsible for their own development is not enough.

It is well established that a number of interacting factors combine in causing non participation. These will be very familiar to you but they are still very pertinent:

1. Structural obstacles

The structural obstacles to participation are still very numerous and, in some respects, increasing. First, there are still very wide geographical differences in provision for adults. Some areas are well endowed and others not. Provision of information and advice is also extremely diverse and patchy.

In some areas there may be few factors that actually encourage learning. This has been called the 'learning press': the existence, in a person's working, residential or general social environment of organisations and facilities that actively encourage learning. Some areas (such as large residential estates) have very limited facilities and amenities, have a bleak physical lay-out that discourages communal or group activities and are not safe to move around in after dark.

Then there are the constraints imposed by the education and training system. We all know that the formal education system selects or excludes people in a number of ways: through entry or eligibility procedures; through lack of access points; through the curriculum; through high fee levels and lack of financial support for learners; through the ways in which programmes are presented and organised; through the general institutional ethos and ambience; through publicity using acronyms, educational jargon and references to assessment; through lack of support for non traditional learners.

Though lifelong learning is a much wider concept than formal courses delivered in dedicated buildings, that is how learning is still largely perceived and presented by the majority of the populace. There is still a mystique of unfamiliarity and remoteness surrounding further and higher education, for example, education which makes people feel alienated from them.

Because colleges traditionally had focused mainly on the 16-19 cohort many have developed unconscious practices and signs indicating that they are still geared to younger learners. These are quickly picked up by adults. Similarly, some universities have done little to indicate that they are not predominantly preoccupied with school leavers, full-time study and professional elites. No matter how accessible institutions claim to be, they will not recruit non traditional learners if their 'body language' contradicts their words.

Recent policy shifts have accentuated rather than diminished the structural barriers to participation: the prioritisation, in funding terms, of vocational and accredited adult programmes has led simultaneously to the exclusion of groups who are not ready or sufficiently confident to undertake such programmes, and to a reduction in the number of affordable return-to-learn opportunities for them. Informal, community-based programmes which facilitate people's passage back into education and training are not a funding priority and are becoming an endangered species as a result of the difficulty of obtaining core finance.

2. Material barriers

Practical obstacles related to time, money, caring responsibilities and transport are those most cited in surveys. They are also the most obvious and easily understood and therefore often act as 'face-savers' which mask other reasons such as fear of education and anxiety about ability to learn. For this reason, the removal of barriers of finance, transport and childcare tends to bring in the would-be learners, those who are ready and prepared to learn, rather than the non traditional learners who are deterred by more deep-seated psychological and cultural barriers that are not so easily removed.

3. Lack of interest

Lack of interest is also frequently cited as a major reason for not engaging in learning and this is often used to justify lack of institutional action. However, once again this frequently camouflages suspicion and fear of education and lack of confidence in ability to learn. Lack of confidence plays a significant role in limiting participation in learning. In a recent Basic Skills At Work project targeted at manual staff at Oxford Brookes University, workers typically said things like:

'I felt I was never good enough';

'I don't feel bright enough';

'I would like to do something but I'm frightened;' (Oxford Basic Skills Unit, 1995)

Because of such feelings, many people shun anything with the word 'education' attached. They feel intimidated by formal educational institutions which are perceived as inappropriate for adults, while many think they are too old to learn and undervalue their existing experience, abilities and skills. Much of this is to do with earlier experiences and people's perception of where they 'fit' in the social structure.

4. Socio-cultural barriers

Patterns of adult learning reflect class divisions in society and the different expectations and perceptions resulting from those divisions. Factors such as social class, gender and race impact on decisions to learn as each is associated with particular cultural pressures and norms. Peer and reference group influences can be extremely strong. (These are not the same: peer groups are those with the same characteristics while reference groups are the groups with whom we mainly interact in our social and working life). People who are habitual learners tend to belong to groups where education is seen as a normal activity. They also tend to be involved in other forms of social participation. Non learners belong to groups for whom engaging in learning (particularly if it is not job related) is not part of normal behaviour.

Among male manual workers, for example, there is a strong culture of group conformity and solidarity. At times of mass redundancy attempts to involve such groups in education programmes often founder in the face of the reluctance of workers to be seen engaging in any learning that is not strongly work-related or which has a monetary allowance attached that allows saving of face. To engage in education that is not immediately job-related is seen as

what women or children do and is therefore not a masculine activity. At the same time there may be strong resistance to training or retraining. People who have been doing unskilled jobs without benefit of training do not see any value in undertaking training while those who have been trained and have subsequently lost their jobs often resist taking other, potentially useless, training. Significantly, where there have been successes in recruiting manual workers it has often been where opportunities have been provided collectively, on a whole-organisation basis and in the workplace, so that there are no perceived hierarchical divisions and individuals are not perceived as odd or breaking ranks if they engage in learning.

5. Ambivalent attitudes to education

There are, then, many interdependent reasons why certain groups do not normally engage in organised informal or formal learning and I believe that the general culture of this country, rather than encouraging them, reinforces their reluctance. I believe that one of the major reasons for the wide cultural division in participation is the profound ambivalence we have as a nation towards education in any form but the purely vocational. This is reflected in the contradictions inherent in policy and the language of policy makers:

(i) Amid all the rhetoric about lifelong learning we have a persisting anti-intellectual culture as demonstrated by the depressing regularity with which politicians and the press snipe regularly at teachers, academics, intellectuals and 'trendy' student-centred approaches - scapegoating them, together with the 1960s and single mothers, as the cause of all our economic and social ills. Where are the national role models to demonstrate the benefits of learning? Open university degrees are now associated less with working-class Ritas than with mass murderers, and we have a Prime Minister who felt able to boast, a few years ago, that he had reached that office without benefit of O-levels. If we who are in the educational world fail to make sense of these mixed messages, how can we expect traditional non learners to do so?

(ii) Politicians and industrial representatives repeatedly complain about low skill and educational levels and how this reduces our economic competitiveness. Although the blame for this is usually attributed to teachers, the resourcing of state schools has been drastically reduced resulting in a constant haemorrhage of experienced teachers.

(iii) We have Lifetime Targets which aim 'to raise standards and attainment levels in education and training to world class levels' but which are, bafflingly, restricted to the 'workforce', defined as those currently in work. They exclude the unregistered unemployed, those whose work is casual and intermittent and women who have left the labour force for family reasons, although women are expected to provide over 80% of labour market entrants and re-entrants in the foreseeable future. There are no targets for people with literacy problems (estimated at one in six of the adult population) and none for traditionally non participating groups.

(iv) While we are repeatedly told that Britain needs a more highly skilled workforce, we are simultaneously told that we need a highly deregulated, casualised labour market which competes on the basis of low labour costs! In such a labour market fewer people will need higher level skills and there is strong evidence that employers are less prepared to train people in lower grade, casual or part-time jobs.

(v) To encourage people to take responsibility for their own development, tax incentives have been introduced for people undertaking national vocational qualifications. This does not help people who do not pay tax. There are no tax incentives for people wanting to enhance their general skills although employers frequently say that they value communication skills and general skills more than qualifications. Moreover, the little known and relatively under-used tax incentive is completely outweighed by a raft of structural deterrents which prevent far more people from engaging in learning, for example:

* the lack of financial help for part-time students and flexible learners;
* the restriction of student loans to people under 50;
* the successive cuts in TECs' training budgets;
* the increasingly widespread method of funding according to results which rewards providers who take 'successful' students and penalises them if they take applicants who need more help and take longer to achieve;
* restrictions on the time unemployed people can spend learning and conflicting interpretations of this rule;
* abolition of the additional financial help for mature full-time students in higher education;
* reductions in funding for higher education, as a result of which some institutions are considering top-up fees which will inevitably restrict non traditional student access.
* the fixing of college Access funds for 1996-97 at a lower rate than they were in 1995-96 despite evidence of financial hardship among mature students.

Despite the Lifelong Learning agenda, therefore, some aspects of recent policy actually militate against the participation of non traditional learners. The context in every sector is more for less. In such a climate, providers have to put funder needs before learner needs and provision is organised to maximise income and keep costs down. In such a climate there is little support for development work with under-represented groups and, as a result, outreach work tends to be marginal and poorly resourced. The response from colleges to criticisms from the FEFC Chief Inspector recently was that 'targets can only be met by offering courses for which there is a demonstrable market'.

The market approach obviously leads to an imbalance both in the type of programmes offered and in the nature of participation. The different funding arrangements for Schedules 1 and 2 provision has led to a situation whereby local education authorities providers must try and recoup the costs of provision from the learners. To do this, they need to provide programmes that will attract participants willing and able to pay the fees.

Although there is some special funding available for disadvantaged groups from City Challenge, Single Regeneration Budgets and from Europe, special project funding is finite and usually offered on a year to year basis. There is even pressure on disadvantaged communities to compete between themselves for special funding. Moreover, as it is difficult to get specially funded programmes embedded in institutional funding arrangements, there is rarely any long-term impact on the overall learner profile.

The pattern of participation is unlikely to change while these contradictions exist. Nor will it change as long as the vision of lifelong learning remains so blinkered. Why do most national and European papers on *lifelong* learning put most emphasis on those under the age of 18? Why are all the national learning initiatives and campaigns largely about the workforce and vocational learning? Why do official papers on lifelong learning make token references to things like the enrichment of life but go on at length about skills for work?

The current stress in lifelong learning papers on work skills leaves out large chunks of the population. What about the increasing number of older and retired people in the population? Although there is evidence that learning has a strongly positive effect on older people's health, well-being and activity levels, the signs are that older adults now have access to fewer opportunities than before. Take the European White Paper *Teaching and Learning : Towards the Learning Society*. Although the concept of lifelong learning is strongly supported, the paper pays scant attention to demographic changes and the increasing proportion of people over retirement age (most of whom will be women). The emphasis is on skills for employment rather than on learning to assist people in all aspects of their lives. Moreover, virtually all the proposals for change are aimed at the initial education and training periods of life while the needs of adult learners are given scant attention (Waddington, 1996).

Given this context, it is not surprising that we have made so little progress towards achieving a national shift towards a lifelong learning culture.

Changing The Pattern

Things don't change just by wishing them to change but only by concerted action. We do not need any more research on how to reach non traditional learners. We know that it can be done and how it can be done. Since the 1970s there have been countless examples of innovative programmes for manual workers, people with literacy needs, women, the unemployed, different ethnic groups etc. that have demonstrated that investment in sensitive outreach, recruitment, delivery curricular and learner support strategies can bring in people from non participating groups. With the exception of the literacy movement, many of these have unfortunately foundered through lack of continuing financial support.

Every so often there is a flurry of anxiety about imbalances in participation. Committees and enquiries are set up just as is happening now. These are very well intentioned and often commission research which predictably finds out what has already been known for years: that it is not enough just to put on a course and then advertise it; there has to be investment in the pre access stage, in sensitive outreach and group targeting strategies, to reach those who lack the education, the confidence or the means to take advantage of existing opportunities. There also has to be attention to delivery, timing, the learning environment and support structures such as help with fees, transport and childcare to suit non traditional learners. Pump-priming funds are then made available and a number of new schemes with these features are set up explicitly to attract new groups. These may be very successful but many again turn out to be short-lived because after the pump-priming period is over, they are deemed too costly to continue. Thus the same cyclical process has been re-enacted: a few people have benefited but there has been little change in the overall situation. A lot of energy and time has been expended on 'one-offs' and less on developing established work.

There are still, fortunately, some excellent initiatives and schemes around for non traditional learners. To cite only a few diverse examples:

* Unison's comprehensive return to learn scheme for members which has brought in many non traditional learners

* Pecket Well College for adults with literacy needs and disabilities

* The Women's Electronic Village Hall in Manchester

* In-house employee development schemes. An investigation of over 450 schemes indicated that a large proportion of participants are unskilled or semi-skilled workers who left school at 16 or earlier (DFEE, 1996)

* The Inn-Tuition scheme in Leeds involving college taster programmes in five local pubs, financed by the European Year of Lifelong Learning and a local brewery. The organisers were also planning to set up courses and a crèche for mothers on a local estate

* The 'Activate' Programme for new adult learners at the Walsall College of Arts and Technology which is planned to run in a large working men's club

* East Leeds family Centre which has brought free, part-time courses to 1,500 people, most of them non traditional learners, as a result of a concerted effort by City Council, TECS, local colleges and schools

* South Bristol College's Learning Minibus which takes information to outlying estates, and invites people to have a go on the computers on board

* Rycote College's Cut, Advice and Blow Dry Project which uses hair stylists to disseminate learning information.

The characteristics many of these schemes have in common is a targeted approach. It is much easier to target groups than individuals. They have also recognised that conventional publicity such as prospectuses and brochures do not work with non traditional learners. Information has to be put across in a form people can use and relate to. People do not notice or absorb information that does not accord with their lifestyle and current preoccupations. Information has to be specially designed and disseminated for different groups. That is why during Adult Learners' Week information about information hotlines is enclosed with unemployed people's Giro cheques.

They are also characterised by diversity: lifelong learning does not just involve formal, course-based and institution-based learning but can take a variety of forms in a variety of settings. They show that learning opportunities and information about learning opportunities need to be taken to where people are.

Most importantly, they are characterised by collaborative partnerships between different agencies. As Gillian Shephard said in her speech to launch Adult Learners' Week earlier this

year: 'achieving cultural change is not for governments alone. It depends on the sustained actions of many.' That is true. But changing the pattern of participation on a national scale requires more than a cluster of diverse initiatives in different parts of the country. Without political will, commitment and adequate finance, we will never achieve the real culture change necessary to change participation. We will continue to fiddle around on the edges with bits of short-term special funding, helping a few people to get in here and there, but not altering the overall profile of adult learners.

Conclusion

My shopping list for changing the culture would be:

1. Funding steers

   Central funding steers are an important means of changing participation patterns. We cannot concentrate on one stratum of society just because they are easier to reach and cheaper to teach. Non traditional learners are more likely:

   * to have poor previous educational experience
   * to be under social or economic pressure
   * to lack confidence in their ability to learn
   * to have low expectations
   * not to see the relevance of educational offers.

   They therefore require investment in:

   * recruitment strategies
   * flexible course planning and delivery to suit different circumstances
   * good initial guidance and support
   * personal support (e.g. finance, childcare, benefit advice)
   * learning support (e.g. help with study skills see Uden, 1996).

   Funding systems are required which encourage collaboration rather than competition and which reward rather than penalise institutions which make special efforts to recruit and retain under-participating groups. This should be *core* rather than special funding.

2. More equitable funding of students in different learning modes and more financial help for essential support such as child care and more secure funding for voluntary organisations. All the evidence suggests that an initial investment will pay off since, once new learners have experienced learning as something fulfilling and enjoyable, the chances are that many will wish to continue even in their own time and at their own expense. The key to continuation in learning is to give people a good experience of learning. Recent participation is one of the most important predictors of the likelihood to engage in learning in the future. Two thirds of unemployed college students in a recent NIACE survey (Thomson, 1996) said that the course they had attended made them more likely to continue learning in the future.

I have found over and over again that free Return to Learn courses with support such as childcare attract participants who had not previously engaged in any post school learning. People are understandably unwilling to invest money in something unknown, untried and initially frightening. Significantly, once involved, many become so enthusiastic and motivated that a number are then willing to pay some of the costs of attending other courses.

3. An end to the arbitrary division between Schedule 1 and 2 and the continuing stress on narrow employment skills. If we want to achieve higher participation rates then we have to accept that learning needs to be geared to people's interests and aspirations rather than those of politicians or employers. If we wish to develop a lifetime learning culture then general education, education for living, as well as vocationally relevant learning must be seen as equally worthy of support. Improving workforce skills is not the only goal of learning. The starting point of the Unesco call for dialogue and debate in preparation for the Fifth International Conference on Adult Education (to be held in 1997) is that: 'learning throughout life cannot be uni-dimensional: a balance has to be found between work, social and community life and personal development so that people can learn to know, to do, to live together, to be, to become and to create a synergy between all these experiences.'

4. This is not to say that work related learning should not be strongly supported, but that other forms of learning to assist people in the various other aspects of their lives should also be recognised and supported. We cannot afford to dismiss learning that is not work related as intrinsically less useful. Education to help people make creative use of leisure time can enhance life for many groups in our society who are materially and culturally disadvantaged. It is particularly significant at a time when we have an ageing population. It is not money down the drain if people are helped to develop themselves and gain general education skills. On the other hand, we shouldn't be too pious in our attitudes to vocational education. It does not compromise educational values if programmes aim to prepare people for employment by giving them marketable skills. There is a need and room for both and they should not be mutually exclusive. We need a more fluid and accessible system in which the artificial distinctions and polarities are broken down.

5. Some form of legislation to encourage employers to offer training and development opportunities to all their employees. It is clear that many businesses will not, of their own volition, take more responsibility for training. According to one report (*Independent on Sunday*, 1996), 79% of companies say they regard training as a priority but only 8% set aside any budget for it.

6. Amendment of the Education and Training targets so that they include not just the current workforce but all those who intend or wish to work, people who are disadvantaged in their access to learning opportunities and those who have come to an end of working life but who wish to remain physically and mentally active.

7. Greater local co-ordination of opportunities

8. Greater attention to lifetime learning and the role of learning in TV. TV can make a huge contribution to changing cultural patterns. By presenting special programmes and role models it could encourage more people to believe that learning is not for other people but also for them. The BBC's Second Chance campaigns during Adult Learners Weeks demonstrate that it is possible to change people's behaviour by using short comic programmes with recognisable personalities. It is unfortunate that as a result of the 1991 Broadcasting Act education lost access to prime time TV (Tucket 1996).

In short, to change participation patterns requires concerted and co-ordinated strategies by policy-makers, providers and a range of national and local organisations working in partnership. We know that increasing and widening participation is initially cost-intensive but the returns to the individual, the community, the economy - if they could be costed - must surely outweigh this.

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CHAPTER EIGHT

EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT SCHEMES: PANACEA OR PASSING FANCY

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This paper will consider the development, characteristics and impact of Employee Development Schemes (EDSs), predominantly in a British context, and assess their relevance for wider debates about lifelong learning. It draws on an earlier paper written in collaboration with Bill Horrocks, the Educational Adviser for the Employee Assistance and Development Programme at Ford's Halewood plant, and benefits from his comments on subsequent drafts.

Context

A recent Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) publication Successful Strategies for Employee Development Schemes asserts that "the EDS movement in Great Britain is reaching a size which should ensure that it becomes a valued and common feature of staff development and a practical means of initiating a learning organisation approach" (DfEE, 1996:5). While it may be somewhat premature to suggest that EDSs are firmly entrenched as part of the furniture of organisational structures, their emergence can certainly be regarded as significant in the wider context of a shift in contemporary attitudes towards learning. It can be argued that trends in a number of inter-related arenas have contributed to this.

Firstly, at a national level, there has been growing disquiet about the skills and qualifications of the British workforce, fuelled by a perceived need to enhance the country's international competitiveness. Concerns about the reluctance of British employers to provide training for their employees have been voiced with regularity since the last century (Perry, 1976). This belief has been strengthened in the last decade, with a steady output of research reports and other publications pointing to deficiencies in the skills and qualifications of the British workforce, in comparison to the workforces of our international competitors. For example, the CBI's *Towards a Skill Revolution* (1989) described the British workforce as 'under-educated, under-trained, and under-qualified'. Writers such as Keep (1989) and Finegold and Soskice (1988) have claimed that the evidence from the early 1980s indicated that British employers were spending between 0.15 and 0.5 per cent of turnover on training, whereas in Japan, Germany, France and the United States the figure was in excess of 1 per cent, and up to 3 per cent. This has inevitably raised questions about the efficiency and effectiveness of the education system and of the vocational education and training system. Thus, the perceived deficiencies of these systems have been held to be central to the nation's inability to compete effectively in the long term in world markets (Barnett, 1986; Wiener, 1981; Porter, 1990, Hutton, 1995). More recently, the debate has grown from a concentration on vocational training to encompass a concern with increasing participation in processes of learning of the population as a whole. Indeed, the necessity to enhance adult participation in learning has been advocated on the basis of the pace of industrial change, heightened international competition, the changing demographic structure, and the now familiar fact that 80% of the workforce in the year 2000 are already at work.

Secondly, there is a growing acceptance that it is not sufficient merely to provide training to a certain number of individuals in order to equip them with the skills required to fill identified skill shortage areas. Rather, there has to be a much more fundamental reappraisal of, and attitudinal shift towards, the value attached to learning by society as a whole. The emergence of these ideas has spawned publications and initiatives, such as the National Institute for Adult and Continuing Education's (NIACE) The Learning Imperative, the RSA's Learning for the Future initiative and the Economic and Social Research Council's (ESRC) Learning Society

initiative. It can currently be seen in initiatives such as NIACE's Adult Learners Week and the RSA's Campaign for Learning.

At government department level, this trend is epitomised by the creation of the Individual Commitment Branch, within the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE), and by the Department's approach to policy formulation, which now incorporates the notion of a 'total learning' system with components such as: increasing awareness; information and guidance; choice empowerment and pricing of learning; modern qualifications; provider flexibility; access issues; financial options; rewards for investment; quality assurance; and customer care. It is also manifested in initiatives such as Investors in People (IiP) and the National Targets for Education and Training (NTETs). Although the targets for the NTETs refer to the 'employed workforce', there appears to be an increasing awareness that a concentration on the development of vocational skills is too narrow an approach to adopt in order to redress the inadequacies of the workforce, and that there should be a shift of attention to a concern with the employability and development of individuals, whether they be in or out of the labour force. This is allied to a strong belief, particularly from those who are involved in adult education, that all members of a society should have the opportunity to continue to learn and develop throughout life (Tuckett, 1993; Ball, 1993).

Certainly, the workplace has grown in prominence as an arena for learning. Traditionally, learning at work has been equated with training, which has been undertaken in order to impart specific job-related skills, or in order to inculcate a company ethos or culture. Research from different parts of the world has shifted this debate by suggesting that the way in which work is organised is of fundamental importance in understanding the process of skill formation, and overrides any concentration on individuals and the factors which affect their motivation. Research in the Far East attributed the higher productivity levels of Japanese firms to differences in organisational structure and the ways in which these differences influenced the process of skill formation. Japanese organisations enable employees to continue to move upwards in terms of income and status, but crucially they facilitate the acquisition of breadth and depth of skill (Koike and Inoki, 1990). In this context motivation to train or acquire a skill is not a problem, as the individuals are embedded in an organisational structure which facilitates the acquisition of skill through time. Also, research carried out in the USA and Poland suggests that the type of work undertaken and the degree of autonomy and responsibility enjoyed by those carrying out the work have a significant effect on the employee's intelligence and ability to learn (Kohn and Slomczynski, 1990). Partly as a result of a growing awareness of the differences in productivity and commitment to the organisation achieved by the introduction of adaptations to organisational structures and espoused company cultures, there is a burgeoning literature and debate over the efficacy of the 'learning organisation' (Pedler, Burgoyne and Boydell, 1991; Senge, 1992).

Nevertheless, there remains the issue of unevenness of the distribution of individuals in learning and training activities. It has long been established that certain 'broad' groupings are underrepresented in learning. These groups have been identifiable by characteristics such as age, gender, ethnicity, socio-economic grouping, educational background, school-leaving age, previous participation in training, employment status, type of work, income, marital status and domestic responsibilities. In terms of employees engaging in training, it has been shown that participation is low among workers who are: in part-time, seasonal or casual jobs; self-employed; employed in small and medium-sized enterprises; unskilled; and those lacking

educational qualifications. Although females were formerly included in this list, recent evidence from the LFS points to this no longer being the case.

The Training in Britain study provided evidence of the relationship between previous education and participation in training, with those who receive higher levels of education being more likely to receive further training at work. Edwards et al (1993) also suggest that participation in education and training is closely linked to previous and recent participation in learning. They attribute this situation to cultural factors, so that members of different social classes tend to adopt class norms which greatly influence behaviour. As far as the working class is concerned, "a particular culture is engendered, a culture of non-participation, in which forms of provision are perceived to be part of a middle class culture". Commenting on the American experience, Reich posits that "college graduates are 50 per cent more likely to be trained by their corporation than are high school graduates; within high-tech industries, employers with postgraduate degrees are twice as likely to receive training as mere college graduates. Training, then, is typically provided to those who need it least" (Reich, 1991). A recent study conducted by IER which undertook further analysis of the 1993 Commitment to Learning: Individuals' Attitudes Survey confirmed the findings of earlier studies that "the greatest likelihood of learning in the future is recent experience of learning. Recent job-related learning quadruples the likelihood of future learning while other recent learning increases the likelihood by almost as much" (Maguire, Hasluck and Green, 1996). Thus, the role of continuing training is crucial to the attainment of broader societal goals, in terms of the achievement of a learning society.

It should also be remembered that in terms of motivations to learn, the literature suggests that, while individuals can have a variety of reasons for participating in learning, with a broad distinction often being made between job-related or career development reasons and non-work-related reasons, such as personal development, work-related reasons lie behind most decisions to participate in training, if not in learning activities more generally. The apparent antipathy towards training on the part of workers in the lower levels of the occupational hierarchy was partly attributed by Rigg (1989) to the lack of opportunities afforded them by their employers. This may be compounded by a lack of reward for, or recognition of, learning on the part of employers. Moreover, Munn and Macdonald (1988) contended "that most adults hold a view that training is intrinsically uninteresting, not worth giving time to, and of little practical use". This points again to the need to influence and change deeply-entrenched cultural values if overall participation is to be enhanced. To effect this cultural change, the focus may initially have to be on learning for personal interest, in order to break down barriers to participation in training.

Lifetime Learning: a consultation document (Department for Education and Employment, 1995) asserts that "employers must lie at the heart of all efforts to increase participation in lifetime learning" (p11). Given the established trend of significantly increased employer commitment to training over the last ten years (Labour Market Trends, 1995-96, DfEE, 1995a), such an assertion would seem to point to employers being willing and responsive recipients of exhortations to encourage greater commitment to learning by their workforces. Moreover, the benefits accruing to employers from training activity are also well-documented. For example, studies by the National Institute for Economic and Social Research have suggested that high levels of training are associated with higher productivity (Steedman and Wagner, 1987; Prais, Jarvis and Wagner, 1989), while Bishop (1990) posited that increased

productivity following training typically exceeds any increase in pay, thereby generating a return for the employer. What is more debatable, however, is the value which employers attach to non-job-related learning activity by their employees, and their perceptions of the benefits accruing to the organisation, notwithstanding Campbell's argument that "overall, productivity, competitiveness and profitability are positively associated with a learning culture" (Learning Pays: A Tool Kit, Employment Department, 1995).

Employee Development Schemes

The spread of employee development schemes is highly relevant to this debate Following the example set by Ford's EDAP scheme, there is a rapidly growing list of companies involved in similar activity in Britain. Crucially, such schemes are seen to encourage participation in learning. Whilst, initially, these are often not work-related, they subsequently lead to greater participation in, and commitment to, work-related training. The personal development of the individual is a key factor in these schemes. Bridge and Salt (1992) clearly differentiate between these types of schemes and work-based learning which tends to be vocational and job-specific. An evaluation of employee development schemes considered them to be:

> *employee development schemes are proving to be one of the successes of human resource management ... [they] can have real business advantages, creating some of the right conditions for organisations to transform themselves into what has been called the 'learning organisation', but what might as appropriately be termed the 'continuously changing organisation', given economic imperatives.....(and) a positive impact on individuals' self-esteem and confidence (IRS, 1993).*

Moreover, the development of a synergy between formal job-related training and the less directly job-related activities which are taken up under employee development schemes may become a powerful tool for enhancing the skills base of the workforce at large.

Payne's (1992) study of large firms which were either known to have set up employee development schemes or were regarded as leaders in the field of training showed that, unlike Ford EDAP, which evolved from a trade union initiative, the vast majority of schemes were management initiatives, with common characteristics being:

- multinational companies
- experiencing difficulty in recruiting professional and technical staff
- conscious of the need for new skills
- had discussions with trade unions
- links with Higher Education institutions
- links with Colleges of Further Education

Since that time, there has been a plethora of developments and innovations, notably in attempts to introduce the initiative to small and medium-sized companies. It was estimated that by mid 1995 the total number of companies involved had grown to about 350 (DfEE, 1995b). Current numbers will be substantially above that figure, partly due to the provision of DfEE funding for Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) to introduce pilot schemes. The potential for their growth was apparent from the interest generated by the launch of the International Consortium for Employee Development (ICED) in November 1995. This venture, incorporating collaboration between the universities of Salford, Warwick and

Nottingham, seeks to create a more widespread awareness and understanding about EDSs and what they can offer both employers and employees.

Ford's Employee Development and Assistance Programme (EDAP) was created in 1987 by a joint trade union and management agreement. Its main objective was:

> *"to provide opportunities for personal development and training outside working hours for all employees of the Company." (Minutes of National Joint Negotiating Committee, Ford Motor Company Limited, 7 December 1987, p.3)*

At that time, the improving of industrial relations within the company was an avowed aim of the agreement. On the basis of a similar programme which had been operating in the company in the United States, it was envisaged that up to 20% of the company's employees would avail themselves of the opportunities available under the programme. Subsequently, the objectives were broadened to encompass career development and healthier lifestyles.

The programme itself was launched in 1989, with an initial allocation of £1,850,000 being apportioned to the EDAP Committees which had been set up within the various plants in the United Kingdom. Under the scheme, each Ford UK employee is eligible for an annual grant of up to £200 to go towards the cost of courses which have to be undertaken on a voluntary basis, out of working time, and be distinct from all job-related training which is carried on. From the outset, it was apparent that there would be no shortage of interest in, or enthusiasm for, the programme on the part of the employees. A survey of employees' opinions, carried out by the Trade Union Research Unit (TURU) at Ruskin College, Oxford, in 1989, suggested that an overwhelming majority of employees would be interested (Hougham, Thomas and Sisson, 1991). As it was, rather than the 5% of employees who had been predicted to apply for grants, 15,000 employees, representing one third of the workforce, applied for grants within the first six months of the programme's operation (Mortimer, 1990). Subsequent events have shown that this was no mere flash in the pan, for progress since then has been substantial. A recent publication shows that, since being introduced to its 19 UK locations:

> *...31% of employees have applied for educational courses from basic literacy and numeracy skills to computer studies with GCSEs in a wide range of subjects and university degrees. A further 32% of employees are learning new skills, for example wood-working, bricklaying, plastering, car maintenance, decorating, cake-making and cookery. Figures reveal that 18% of employees have taken health courses from fitness tests and weight reduction classes to smoking cessation. In addition 19% of employees are taking up leisure or hobby interests and most local committees see this as a way of encouraging employees who have not previously been involved in further education to return to learning. Over 300 employees are currently engaged in degree courses in association with various HE institutions. (Willoughby, Spence and Gorman, 1996)*

Although EDAP is generally regarded as the 'trailblazer' in this field, the growing number of initiatives which are broadly grouped under the employee development banner often differ from the Ford blueprint in a number of ways. For example, Unipart's scheme is predominantly devoted to the provision of open learning, while Jaguar's scheme is not available to management staff. Broadly, however, EDSs can be characterised as encompassing:

- an entitlement to funding for learning activity
- participation in the scheme being on a voluntary basis

- the learning activity may be work-related, but is often non work-related, and may even include recreational or leisure pursuits
- the learning activity is separate from that which is provided under the company's formal training programme

It should be emphasised that there is no single ideal format and structure of an employee development scheme. Rather, a number of different approaches may be taken, the crucial factor being that the approach which is chosen should be commensurate with the needs of the organisation into which it is being introduced. However, on the basis of experience of introducing the concept of EDSs, a number of common characteristics which are likely to assist the successful implementation of the scheme, can be identified. These characteristics are:

- the need for them to be employee-led, with control of the scheme being vested in the staff (this may benefit from, or be instigated by trade union involvement)
- schemes should support the provision of 'broad' learning, which may exclude job-specific training
- a multiplicity of providers of learning, which goes beyond those customarily used for training - and the need to establish strong links with them
- flexibility of provision, which affords access to learning opportunities at times and localities which are convenient for both learners and employers - e.g. after work sessions are preferable to lunchtime sessions - open learning may assist this
- the availability of independent guidance, information and advice, so that potential learners are appraised of a range of opportunities and the benefits accruing from them (e.g. roadshows to generate awareness) (e.g. provision of study programme)
- commitment at all levels of the organisation, unencumbered by the imposition of measurement of costs and benefits, and by the threat of suspended judgement
- the ability of the scheme to act as a vehicle for the introduction of other initiatives and ideas e.g. IiP, NVQs
- a belief in learning as a 'good thing' - the ability of the scheme to stimulate renewed interest in learning
- recognition of the importance of learning for improved motivation and performance in personal and business terms
- a belief in the ability of employee development to increase organisational efficiency and promote a positive culture in the workplace
- responsiveness of the TEC to support the initiative
- the allocation of money by the company with no strings attached
- administration by people who believe in, and are confident with the scheme, who are, in turn, supported by a network of people to help co-ordinate the scheme
- the creation of a network of small and medium-sized organisations to promote personal development
- the establishment of links with local providers of training, guidance, information, education, etc.
- an emphasis on the personal development of the individual
- creation of awareness of learning opportunities, qualifications, standards etc.

Benefits Derived from EDSs

Employers who have been involved in EDSs invariably wax lyrical about the benefits to be derived. These commonly include:

- enhanced productivity and achievement by the company
- reduced labour turnover and absenteeism
- a more highly skilled and qualified workforce
- a more flexible workforce
- improved industrial relations
- increased levels of personal development
- increased take-up of job-related training
- greater motivation, loyalty and enjoyment of work on the part of the employees
- external recognition of company's excellence in training
- the creation of a culture of learning within the organisation

Unfortunately, there is a dearth of hard evidence to substantiate these claims. A good example of the perception of their worth can be found at Ford, where the National Co-ordinators of EDAP proclaim:

> *There is no 'bottom line' - EDAP cannot prove that people participating in EDAP produce more or better quality work. However, what EDAP can say is; 'It works for us!' (Willoughby et al, 1996).*

This is an interesting statement, because it reveals that a company as big as Ford, which has allocated a phenomenal amount of resources to sustaining the archetypal EDS, has not sought to justify this expenditure in terms of 'bottom line' returns. Rather, there is an acknowledgement that a less tangible 'feel good factor' provides sufficient justification.

As far as the benefits accruing to employees is concerned, these can broadly be grouped into: those which are related to their job or career; those which enhance the self-confidence and self-esteem of the individual; those related to a desire for intellectual stimulation; and those whereby individuals are enabled to pursue topics or activities of specific interest, be they work-related or recreational. Responses from a sample of participants in EDSs currently being implemented in Southern Derbyshire confirm this to be the case. A variety of reasons for participating in the scheme were given. Some of these were job-related or concerned with the acquisition of qualifications in order to enhance their future career options or job prospects. Some were interested in pursuing specific courses or acquiring specific skills, while others wished to become involved in learning for its own sake. The benefits which they had derived included greater self-confidence, greater assertiveness, gaining qualifications, acquiring specific skills and developing their knowledge. Another benefit which was widely mentioned was the fact that they had met different people. The majority claimed that they would not have undertaken the learning activity without the assistance of the EDS, the main constraints being the cost and a lack of information about what was available.

Barriers to Implementation and Issues Arising

The foregoing would suggest that both employers and employees have much to gain from introducing some form of EDS. Nevertheless, numerous factors can inhibit the ability of a

scheme to be implemented successfully. For employers, the first consideration is often the cost. Clearly, whatever the level at which the employee's allowance is fixed (although the EDAP figure is £200 per year, it is more customary to be somewhere between £50 and £100), there are other cost considerations to be taken into account. These include paying for training provision and time off work and staff time to administer and support the scheme. While such costs can be estimated with comparative ease, as has already been suggested, the pay-offs for employers are more difficult to quantify. Concepts such as 'commitment to the organisation' and 'a culture of learning' rarely come with output measures attached. The longstanding reluctance of a large proportion of employers, and especially those representing small and medium-sized establishments, to provide training opportunities is well-established. To persuade them that it is in their interests to make provision for activities which are not directly work-related, or which may equip them with skills and qualifications which enable them to pursue their careers by leaving their current employment will not be easy. Quite reasonably, the DfEE is attempting to show that there is a 'business case' for such activities, by identifying the 'bottom line' benefits. The Ford experience would suggest that it may be the less easily measurable outcomes which are the most powerful in selling the concept.

Associated with the issue of costs, particularly for those schemes which have been initiated through part-funding from the local TEC, is how individual EDSs can be sustained after the initial pump-priming money has ceased to be available. Although there are numerous examples of employers becoming evangelistic about employee development and of employees becoming learning junkies, there is clearly a need for great commitment to notions of lifelong learning from the outset.

Another important issue concerns the eligibility criteria which are applied to any particular scheme. Notions of equity would seem to provide a case for all employees in an organisation having access to the scheme. However, consideration could also be given to restricting access to those occupational groups whose members had traditionally exhibited low levels of participation in learning. If the aim were to encourage the participation of non-traditional learners, some element of selection may be appropriate, particularly in the light of our knowledge that recent experience of learning is the most significant determinant of future participation in learning. In the Southern Derbyshire initiative which was mentioned earlier, many of the learners under the scheme had relatively recent experience of learning. For those responsible for implementing the schemes, a greater reward, or benefit, may accrue from the participation of those who had not considered engaging in learning before, often on the grounds that "I'm only a.....(cleaner/typist/machine minder - or whatever)".

There is also the issue of what constitutes an acceptable learning activity. In most discussions of adult education, the definition is restricted to the provision of distinct opportunities which are planned and which have an overtly educational purpose. Two main types of provision can be distinguished within the provision of planned activities. The first type is the traditional formal teaching and learning activity, such as part-time evening class or full-time course in a college. Open and distance learning would also fall into this category. The second type of planned activity is organised but may be less structured in terms of its educational objectives. This would include the 'recreational' aspect of adult education. There is some debate as to whether such activities should be linked with adult education, for by including recreational activities it is argued that the status of adult education provision is diminished. For example, Wiltshire (in Rogers, 1976) contends that casual learning and most recreational activities

should be excluded. This has implications for EDSs for the experience of EDAP and other schemes suggests that participation in activities such as fitness training, ballroom dancing and music lessons can have a significant impact on subsequent 'susceptibility' to learning (Maguire and Horrocks, 1995).

The availability of appropriate course or teaching provision may not always be unproblematic, and must be carefully thought through. The effects of generating interest and raising expectations which are subsequently unable to be realised are likely to be greatly demotivating for individuals and may make it more difficult to turn them on to learning in the future. To prevent this happening, there needs to be sufficient pre-planning and attention paid to the availability of information, guidance and advice services. Also, where the attainment of NVQs may be involved, then the availability of workbased assessors will have to be organised.

Future Prospects for EDSs

A central tenet of current DfEE policy is to raise awareness among employers of the benefits to be derived from providing training and learning opportunities. Two interrelated obstacles to rapid results in this endeavour concern the traditional resistance, especially among small and medium-sized establishments, to providing training for their employees, and the requirement for evidence of relatively short-term, 'bottom line' benefits for the company before a greater commitment to training will be countenanced. Several TECs are currently engaged in innovatory and experimental schemes to attract small and medium-sized employers to participate. For example, this may be done through concentrating an initiative on a specific geographical area, such as an industrial estate, or on a particular industrial sector.

Despite the assertion quoted earlier that the EDS movement in the UK is now of sufficient size to suggest that it will become firmly established, it should be remembered that, in total, there are, to date, only a minute proportion of companies involved. Furthermore, the history of industrial development is scattered with the remains of ideas and initiatives which were greeted with great enthusiasm, only to turn out to be a passing fad. It is therefore wise to treat EDSs with an element of circumspection. However, the evidence so far points to such schemes offering great potential for contributing significantly to the inculcation of learning cultures within workplaces, by enlisting the commitment of both employers and employees. Again, the Ford experience is worth recounting.

Despite being introduced in an industrial sector which is not noted for its harmonious relations between management and workers, Ford EDAP seems, so far, to have avoided the pitfalls which could have been anticipated, given the tension which is ever-present between individual needs and corporate goals. It may even ultimately become regarded as a blueprint for the 'learning organisation'. For the company, the business case for the introduction of such a scheme, in the absence of any guaranteed cost-benefit analysis projections, is supported by the findings of a Gallup survey which estimates that "the cost of poor basic skills to UK industry is more than £4.8 billion per year. On average, poor basic skills cost every company employing more than 50 people about £165,000 per year" (The Cost to Industry: Basic Skills and The UK Workforce). Although this fact alone should encourage companies to re-assess their attitude to employee development, the potential benefits far exceed such 'bottom line' considerations. Ford's experience would suggest that benefits also accrue in terms of attitudes to vocational training, resulting from the 'non-vocational' learning undertaken through the

scheme. This points to a potential synergy between non-vocational learning and vocational training. By recognising and rewarding participation in learning of all types, a learning culture may become part and parcel of the ethos of the organisation, thereby releasing the massive untapped potential which lies dormant in many workforces.

The beneficial impact of EDSs may also extend beyond the workplace. By attracting non-traditional learners into some form of learning, it may serve to make learning become regarded as a more acceptable and usual activity within households and communities where this was not previously the case. To this end, a scheme currently being implemented in Lincolnshire has extended eligibility for inclusion in the programme to families of employees. Although this highlights the tremendous potential for EDSs to effect greater attachment to participation in learning, it also illustrates the need to view such programmes as only part of a much wider process. The seriousness with which they are being taken in the UK, and, indeed, the attention accorded lifelong learning by all political parties and by the European Year of Lifelong Learning, may be cause for satisfaction that progress is being made. When viewed from an international perspective, however, it may be that there remains much to be done merely to catch up with other economies. For example, in Japan, the development of Lifelong Learning Villages, whereby themes and policies related to the availability of learning opportunities are enshrined in legislation and impact on all aspects of individuals' lives, may suggest that initiatives targeted specifically on the workplace are not needed. Rather, a culture of learning is endemic throughout the society.

As we are some way from achieving such attachment to learning, EDSs remain a powerful tool for effecting cultural change. Indeed the evidence emanating from Ford's experience of operating EDAP and from more recent manifestations of EDSs provides a powerful argument for refuting, or at least treating with circumspection, the notion that 'cultural' factors are responsible for Britain's relative deficiencies in learning and skill acquisition. This experience would point to there being no widespread unwillingness to participate in learning activities, providing that opportunities are available and barriers to entry are not made insuperable by the rigidity of the institutional framework and the absence of mechanisms to encourage participation, notably in terms of cost and time. What is clear from this experience is that such initiatives hold out great promise for future advances in participation in learning. There is great scope for developments and experimentation. There is also a pressing need for research into many aspects of this phenomenon, including the impact on the attitudes, aspirations and commitment of the participants and of the benefits accruing to individuals, organisations and society at large. Much of this research would inevitably have to be undertaken in depth and/or longitudinally. It would have the potential, however, to advance our knowledge and to inform policy-making related to the upskilling of the workforce and the self-development of all current and potential members of that workforce.

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CHAPTER NINE

ADULT GUIDANCE AND THE LEARNING SOCIETY: THE MARKETISATION OF GUIDANCE SERVICES IN THE UK, FRANCE AND GERMANY

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Introduction

As labour markets become more turbulent and 'flexible', labour contracts have become increasingly fixed-term and/or part-time. The old concept of a 'job for life' and the traditional 'psychological contract' between employer and employee have begun to break down (Collin and Watts 1996). Labour market participants increasingly expect to make frequent job changes and indeed occupational changes in the course of their working lives. These shifts, spurred on by technological change and increased global competition, have considerable ramifications, one of which is an increase in demand for lifelong learning. If 'lifelong learning' is to be a reality, more accessible ports of entry and routes of progression will be needed in education and training systems. Individuals are increasingly expected to create their own trajectories between education, training, employment, unemployment and non-employment, combining learning activities with different employment statuses.

This suggests a heightened role for those services originally designed to facilitate the management of the interface between jobseekers and employers wanting to fill vacancies. The development of a 'learning society' depends significantly upon individuals being able to make informed choices about employment, education and training opportunities throughout their lives. Career guidance services, traditionally oriented towards helping school-leavers manage the transition from education to working life, will need to provide information, advice, counselling and other forms of support to adults moving between these systems and positions.

Guidance services can be seen as providing a brokerage service between adults seeking a suitable niche in the labour market and/or education and training (whatever their current status) and opportunity providers - both employers seeking to recruit employees, and education/training providers seeking to attract students and trainees. In this sense, such guidance services can be described as seeking to facilitate the smooth operation of the labour market and the emerging learning market. How are guidance services gearing up to these new demands? What approaches towards the provision of guidance services for adults are being developed in the Member States of the European Union (EU)?

This paper identifies issues which have emerged from the preliminary findings of our study of adult guidance services in three Member States: the UK, France and Germany. While in all three countries, adult guidance services have traditionally been much less developed than provision for young people, in recent years changes in the labour market and the ageing of the labour force have led to a growth in services for adults.

We focus in particular on the trend, more marked in the UK and France than in Germany, towards the marketisation of adult guidance services: making a market (or, more generally, a quasi-market) of the market brokers. Quasi-markets involve the separation of the provision of a welfare service from its finance. Whilst finance remains a public responsibility, the idea of a quasi-market of this type is to induce synthetic market competition between providers of public services in the hope that this will improve the efficiency with which services are delivered to the public. Marketisation can, but does not always, lead to privatisation, which involves the transformation of publicly owned and managed services into privately owned and managed services, supervised by public authorities through a system of contracts. The services are delivered to users free of charge or, sometimes, through a subsidised voucher system. In

some cases, the vouchers may be seen as a way of pump-priming a real market in which the users pay the full costs.

The careers service has operated traditionally as a public service funded through local authorities but with a high degree of national cohesion. In line with the Government policy of marketising welfare services, the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) has been putting the operation of the careers service out to tender on an area basis. In a series of bidding rounds, contracts have for the most part been awarded to companies set up by the local education authority in partnership arrangements with other local players such as (in England and Wales) Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs). There have also, however, been some new entrants and some expansionism from existing contract holders.

In the UK, recent reforms have opened up the field of guidance work to a process of rapid marketisation and in some cases privatisation (Watts 1995). While the emphasis of the careers service remains on the delivery of a service for young people, a number of experimental programmes have also been introduced for both the employed and the unemployed designed to create a voucher-based quasi-market in adult guidance.

These have led to the emergence of a policy for adult guidance based on a two-level model: a foundation level, comprising free access to information plus some limited guidance support; and a second level, consisting of a range of services (e.g. individual counselling, group sessions, psychometric testing) for which users are expected, wherever possible, to pay.

What impact is the process of marketisation having upon the guidance services and their intervention in the labour market? And how do these recent trends of marketisation (and/or privatisation) in the UK compare with what is happening in other EU Member States? Some key questions to have emerged from our study so far are as follows:

* What is the impact of who pays on the operation of the service?
* What effect does the kind of provider or set of providers (public sector/private sector/third sector) have on what is provided, and to whom?
* What effect do outcome measures of performance tied into contracts have on the nature of the service delivered?

In effect we ask in broad terms to what extent will the marketisation of careers services yield any improvement in what Le Grand and Bartlett (1993) identify as evaluation criteria for measuring the success of welfare reforms: efficiency, quality (or responsiveness), choice and equity?

The comparative dimension of this project has a number of elements. In the first instance we are seeking to compare arrangements in (ultimately) five Member States (1). A wide variety of approaches to the provision of career guidance services is in evidence throughout EU countries (Watts, Guichard, Plant and Rodriguez 1993). These range from the centralised state-managed systems found in Germany, through the pluralistic model found in France, to the more decentralised system based largely on non-profit providers found in Italy. In the first instance, then, there are some significant variations between the Member States under consideration.

Secondly, some sectors of the labour market and learning market which guidance services 'broker' have now extended spatially as a result of the Single Market created in 1992. While the extent of human mobility may be rather less developed than anticipated in some quarters, (see John Field's article on this topic in this volume), nevertheless the removal of restrictions on the mobility of labour within the EU has had implications for the information and advice which guidance services are now called upon to provide. The European Commission (EC) in its White Paper *Teaching and Learning: Towards the Learning Society* (EC 1996; Gass 1996) seeks to set out a framework for lifelong learning where individuals can avail themselves of opportunities throughout the EU. However, it notes that 'The citizen of Europe has better information when choosing a hotel or a restaurant than when choosing a type of training' (EC 1996:34). A similar observation can be made for individuals seeking education and employment opportunities. Nonetheless, considerable investment has been made by the EC in developing systems to enable guidance services to extend the information at their disposal about education, training and job opportunities throughout the EU (including the EURES system and the network of European Information and Guidance Resource Centres). 'Choice' for consumers, at least in terms of being able readily to access information, is theoretically now extended to a European-wide market of such opportunities.

Thirdly, the development of guidance provision has been encouraged by the availability of additional matching funds from the EC through transnational action programmes on education and training. In particular, PETRA (aimed at young people) and more recently LEONARDO DA VINCI (all ages) have had a strong guidance element. Providers are also able to access funding through EC-supported regionally based structural funds. What is the role of the EC in supporting and shaping guidance provision?

The paper begins with a summary of key elements of the quasi-market approach in terms of its applicability to guidance. The recent trends in the marketisation of guidance services in the UK are then described, with attention being drawn to their effects on the three dimensions identified above: who pays, who provides and how do outcome measures impact upon what is delivered. Sections on related trends in Germany and France then follow. The conclusion seeks to identify some key issues for debate on the findings so far.

The marketisation of welfare services

Soon after assuming office in 1979, the Thatcher government quickly set about privatising the nationalised industries. However, with the exception of state-owned housing (Forrest and Murie 1989), the welfare state remained relatively untouched until the beginning of the 1990s. At that point, in such areas as health, education, social care and housing, new institutional arrangements were put in place to replace bureaucratic methods of resource allocation in the provision of welfare services by quasi-market methods of allocation (Bartlett 1992; Bartlett *et al* 1994; Le Grand and Bartlett 1993).

Quasi-markets are an attempt to increase efficiency in the delivery of welfare services by operating market competition principles for state-funded activities. There are many variants of the quasi-market system. In one variant, prices are set by open competitive bidding for contracts between providers, as is the case in the provision of health services. However, in this case the flexibility and independence of the provider organisations is severely limited by a strict set of regulatory conditions laid down by central government covering areas such as rate of

return, disposal of assets, and restrictions on borrowing for new investment projects. In other variants, 'formula funding' or 'capitation' systems are used to set the prices at which providers should deliver their services. For example, in the case of education, the local education authority sets a formula (i.e. a price vector), within guidelines established by central Government.

The relationship between quasi-markets and the extent and type of privatisation varies from case to case. In one variant, publicly owned provider organisations are sold to private owners, often in the form of a management buy-out. The transformation of careers service organisations into new partnership companies out of the old local authority owned and controlled establishments falls into this category. In a second variant, formerly publicly-owned providers are transferred to the control of quasi-government organisations (quangos), as in the case of the transfer of ownership of state-owned hospitals to National Health Service (NHS) Trusts. These are non-profit self-managed organisations whose equity capital is held by the state in the form of 'public equity capital', but whose assets are owned by the Trust and controlled by a management board.

In a third variant, the quasi-market is organised within the framework of continued public ownership, as in the case of education services. The management of publicly-owned schools has been transferred to the schools themselves, which are given devolved budgets. School management boards include representatives of various stakeholders including employees, parents, local industry and the local authority. The quasi-market is instituted through the mechanism of formula funding which attaches an implicit voucher to each child, and creates competition for pupils between schools in a local quasi-market area (Ball, Bowe and Gewirtz 1994).

The defining characteristic of quasi-market mechanisms is therefore not privatisation but rather marketisation; the attempt to mimic market mechanisms within a system of public ownership, or, where ownership is transferred to private or non-profit providers, through a system of regulation (Walsh 1995).

However, quasi-markets do not determine the limits of Conservative government public sector reforms. In a number of cases public services are provided on an open-market, fee-paying basis. Sometimes this occurs as an adjunct of marketisation, as in the case of the careers service reforms.

The marketisation of guidance services in the UK

An influential Confederation of British Industry (CBI) report *Towards a Skills Revolution* (CBI 1989) argued that individuals needed greater incentives to acquire new skills and seek out new types of employment. In effect the report calls for a paradigm shift in individuals' attitudes towards investing in their own skill development. To achieve this, individuals would need to be supported by more effective guidance services. Indeed, in his introduction to a Royal Society of Arts report, Sir Christopher Ball (1993) claimed that 'the availability of high quality careers education and guidance for all throughout life is one of the prerequisites of the development of a world-class workforce and economic recovery in the UK'.

A review of the economic benefits of guidance by the National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling and the Policy Studies Institute added some support to these arguments (Killeen *et al* 1992). The CBI subsequently argued for changes to the careers service which would make it more responsive to the needs of users, and promoted the idea of careers guidance vouchers (CBI 1993).

The CBI reports were followed by the inclusion of reforms to the careers service in the *Trade Union and Employment Rights Act* of 1993. Under the provisions of the Act, in the area of statutory provision, the careers service was to be removed from the control of Local Education Authorities (LEAs) and contracts to run it were to be put out to tender.

In England and Wales, a system of competitive tendering for guidance contracts on an area basis was introduced. The first 13 'pathfinder' contracts were awarded for a three-year period in autumn 1993. A year later, a further 43 contracts were put out to competitive tendering, this time for a five-year period. Bidding for the third and final group of area contracts was carried out in 1995/1996 followed by the second round of contracts for the pathfinder areas. Because of the change from three to five-year contracts, this will be followed by a two-year gap before any further tendering is required.

In Scotland, by contrast, a partnership model between LEA services and Local Enterprise Companies (LECs) was the preferred model, with competitive tendering as the residual model. In England and Wales, most contracts have been bid for and awarded to private companies which have been created on the basis of the old LEA Careers Service, reshaped into a variety of relationships and partnership arrangements with their local TECs. For example 'Careers Service West', based in Bristol, is a private company set up as a partnership and formed as a management buy-out of the former Avon County LEA careers service. Some of these companies are limited by guarantee (e.g. Avon) while others are limited by shares (e.g. Wiltshire).

In a few cases, however, entirely new service providers have entered the field. Nord Anglia, a private-sector company, runs the service in a number of areas. Another example is the Centre for British Teachers (CfBT) which is a registered non-profit charity specialising in the independent educational provision of English as a Foreign Language. It is a global company with over 4,000 employees world-wide, and a turnover of £25 million. It too has won several contracts. The most recent rounds also included a number of 'expansionist bids' by partnership providers, the most successful company in this regard being Surrey.

Core services are now delivered by providers on the basis of a contract negotiated with the state to provide services for the statutory client group (mainly young people plus some adults in further education). Contract holders are also able to make provision for other client groups by winning additional contracts for services to adults or through fee-charging (2). Such fees may be paid by the individual, or by subsidy from the state for specially defined market segments, such as unemployed people, people on low incomes, and in some cases women returners. There is however great antipathy to the notion of charging clients in Scotland and in parts of England and Wales.

The focus of the present study in the UK is on the career guidance companies which have competed for Government contracts to provide core services. However it is important to

contextualise this by emphasising that guidance has always been a multiple provider field. There are many other providers in the public, private and voluntary sectors, including some in educational or employer settings. The Employment Service is the largest provider of information, advice and guidance in the public sector: 8 million advice interviews were held in 1995, largely with people registered as unemployed (CRAC/NICEC 1996). The nature of its guidance activities has been affected by the introduction of the Job Seekers' Allowance in October 1996, which has meant that more of the interview is focused on monitoring job-seeking behaviour. Guidance services are also provided for in the funding mechanism for further education; this is not the case in higher education, though higher education institutions usually tend to offer provision of their own. Guidance is also offered in other settings, such as the voluntary sector, sometimes integrated into programmes of other activities such as training or work preparation.

Guidance activity more generally is also supported by a proliferation of organisations and associations. They are concerned inter alia with important issues of quality control. There is an Advice, Guidance, Counselling and Psychotherapy Lead Body concerned with the competency of practitioners. There is also a National Advisory Council for Careers and Educational Guidance (known as the Guidance Council) which does work on organisational quality and is concerned with standards across all sectors of provision. There are also a number of professional associations in the guidance field, the largest of which is the Institute of Careers Guidance.

Guidance services in Germany

The guidance system in Germany is rooted in a legislative framework oriented towards the commitment by the state to assisting young people with the identification of a career identity. As a consequence, vocational guidance is about enabling the young person's career decision to be fulfilled through provision of appropriate information and advice. It is highly centralised and state-managed (Watts *et al* 1993). The guidance service is closely linked to the apprenticeship system. The emphasis therefore in the state system is on assisting young people to make a transition to a career path. Indeed, the very word for guidance in German (*Berufsberatungsdienst*) implies that the client is a young person.

As in the UK, there are fewer adult guidance services and they are more diverse and less controlled. Indeed, examining the range of providers and the combination of services provided raises starkly the fundamental question as to what 'guidance' actually means. Activities which go under the label of guidance include **providing information** about opportunities in the labour market, providing **one-to-one counselling and advice**, and general **coaching and support** for entering or returning to the labour market (3). This may include some one-to-one sessions but is more likely to focus on group training activities such as preparing a *curriculum vitae*, completing job application forms, confidence building and mock interviews.

The legislation stipulates that there should be open-access vocational guidance and counselling services for all, including adults. In effect, the information centres, BIZ (*Berufsberatungsinformationszentrum*), are overwhelmingly used by young people (Hermanns 1992) including young adults who have dropped out of their apprenticeships or become unemployed having completed their initial training (*Bundesinstitut für Arbeit* 1996).

Nevertheless, the state remains the main source of information on education, training and job opportunities for adults.

The Federal Employment Agency (*Bundesinstitut für Arbeit*) is responsible for job recruitment and training and is therefore the place to register to seek employment. Statutory adult guidance in the form of provision of counselling sessions is part of the responsibility of the local employment office (*Arbeitsamt*). However, whereas for young people the emphasis is on helping them to identify a career identity, for adults the emphasis is on ensuring they get a job as quickly as possible. The organisation which administers the unemployment benefit also provides the guidance, which creates a tension at least and potential role conflict at worst.

While the legal structure lays down a structure of provision for the whole of Germany, there are some opportunities for regional and local variations as the *Land* (region) and local authorities can direct funding to meet particular needs. Our field work focused on two contrasted *Länder* (regions); Bremen (which is facing substantial redundancies in ship-building) and Brandenburg (a 'new' *Land* which includes the city of Berlin). Our case studies included several projects supported by the regional or local *Arbeitsamt* which provided guidance alongside other activities targeted at particular client groups.

It is in the field of guidance integrated into training provision that more diversity has entered into the field. There has been a growth in third-sector and profit-making organisations seeking to target particular groups and offer counselling. While a major source of funding for these activities is the regional or local *Arbeitsamt* budgets for supporting initiatives to meet regional or local needs, federal or regional ministries (for example, the Federal Ministry for Young People, Family, Women and Health) also underpin some activities oriented towards particular groups. This is where some quasi-market activities have developed.

Guidance as an activity integrated into training and preparation for work is now available from a variety of third-sector and private-sector providers funded by these sources and the EC. Target groups for these services include the long-term unemployed, the 'hard to place' and returners to the labour market.

One case study in Bremen was targeted at migrant women who find themselves in a catch 22 situation. Projects which receive state or EC funding are likely to be restricted to the registered unemployed. However, in order to be eligible for benefit entitlement, an unemployed person must have contributed to the social insurance scheme for a minimum of twelve months within a specified time period preceding unemployment. This is problematic for women returners, newcomers such as migrants, and those who have been working below the threshold for eligibility to contribute to the social insurance scheme. For women migrants, whether they were married to other migrants or German citizens proved crucial in accessing language and training opportunities incorporating guidance. Who paid directly affected who was eligible to receive.

Another case study was a shoe-string project supported by the Ministry and the *Arbeitsamt* aimed at women in a rural area of the new *Land* of Brandenburg. Those running the project were themselves East Germans. Their lack of networks with other EC Member States, accentuated by having Russian rather than French or English as their second language, effectively cut off opportunities for participation in EC-funded transnational programmes and

therefore to accessing EC funding. The particular problem they faced was the trauma experienced by East German clients at becoming unemployed, especially women for whom working continuously full-time had been the norm. At the same time, it was clear that these clients exhibited a more open approach to the prospect of retraining and assuming a new career; indeed, the central planning system of East Germany had required them to do precisely this several times in a working lifetime. They were regarded by the project managers as facing fewer adjustment problems in changing their career identities than West Germans, but far greater practical problems in that their skills and qualifications were not recognised (4).

The issue to arise from the German experience is that the state monopoly of guidance services is being slowly challenged by a plethora of private and third-sector organisations supported by funding from the state and the EC. Their emphasis is on activities related to preparing adults for the labour market. The issue of charging clients is not a live one as yet. There is, however, fee-charging in outplacement work, where employers pay for guidance for employees they wish to make redundant: this is where private-sector activity is growing. There are concerns that the professionalism of the state service may be undermined by the more amateur activities of new entrants where there is no regulation or control.

In Germany, the state-provided, bureaucratic system has enjoyed until very recently a legally-based monopoly on adult guidance and placement. That has now been successfully challenged in court by international headhunting companies. This has opened the way for a more pluralistic set of providers to compete for contracts. The state sector increasingly supports in-depth guidance, counselling and training to prepare for work through contracts issued to third-sector not-for-profit organisations and, to a smaller extent, to private sector companies. This means, however, the development of an uneven pattern of provision. Some of the differences in need are highlighted through a comparison of 'old' and 'new' *Länder*. In this sense, Germany provides a particularly interesting case study given current attempts to impose a system of guidance that has been operating in the *Länder* of the old West Germany on the new Lander of the East, where a very different culture and attitude towards career identities and indeed 'lifelong learning' still pertain.

In sum, in Germany the core of adult guidance services remains with the state but is housed within a system designed principally for the initial orientation of young people and a recruitment and placement service for employees and the unemployed. Since the ending of the state monopoly and the rise of unemployment, exacerbated by the reunification of Germany, a plethora of third-sector and private-sector organisations offer a range of services, some of which can broadly be defined as coming under the heading of guidance. The major growth, however, has been in third-sector provision aimed at disadvantaged groups, which combine some aspects of guidance with other activities. Those employed by these providers come from a range of career backgrounds and there is no state or professional association governing the non-state sector. Hence while the core statutory services are highly centralised and regulated, other provision is diverse and uncontrolled. The performance indicators by which such organisations are judged by their funders relate to measurable outcomes like throughput, number of contact hours and market penetration. These drivers shape the nature of provision. There are no attempts to evaluate the impact of the service provided beyond `tick and bash' accounting mechanisms.

Guidance services in France

Whereas the word for guidance in German implies a training content (indeed, the words for training and guidance are often used interchangeably), that in France - *orientation* - is more resonant of guidance *per se*. And whereas in the UK and Germany, the concept of guidance and counselling has widened to include a range of newer activities such as coaching and support for re-entering the workplace, in France the conventional model has been strengthened. This is underlined by the increased professionalisation of guidance in France, where a recent law laid down the requirement that all guidance professionals must have a degree in psychology.

Skills assessment is a distinctive component of guidance work in France, where a *bilan de competence* is issued as an up-to-date account of the bearer's skills. In 1991 a law was introduced giving employees fulfilling certain eligibility criteria the right to take leave of absence for careers guidance including skills assessment. This is funded from an employers' training levy. There is competition to provide this service with the client choosing where to go. The main group of providers are the 26 Inter-Institutional Skills Assessment Centres (*Centres Inter-Institutional de Bilans de Competence*) (CIBC), set up by the Ministry of Labour in 1986. They are partnership organisations, defined as social enterprises. In addition to employees, clients include some unemployed people (generally those deemed most likely to get employment): the state pays for them. However, the emphasis in the CIBCs has been on assessing the skills of employees. Although the CIBCs are multi-agency organisations, some of their partners are also competitors to provide this kind of service. Competitors include the private sector, the Adult Vocational Training Association (*Association Nationale de la Formation Professionalle des Adultes*) (AFPA) and *Retravailler* (see below).

While provision is still mainly in the public sector in France, a quasi-market is beginning to develop, with guidance work being moved increasingly to the third sector. Most of these organisations are independent not-for-profit associations (social enterprises) or public-sector agencies - for example, the National Employment Agency (*Agence Nationale Pour l'Emploi*) (ANPE). Funding is provided on a quasi-market basis through one of three main routes:

(i) By contract negotiated with the Ministry. The main example here is the Adult Vocational Training Association (AFPA). AFPA provides professional vocational training for the employed and unemployed, and adult career guidance especially for the unemployed and for handicapped people. Its income comes from a contract with its parent body, the Ministry of Labour, in a relationship rather similar to that of a hospital trust in the UK. However, the amount of self-financing it now requires has increased from 10 to 30%.

(ii) By formula funding at a local level. An example here is the Local Missions (*Missions Locales*), which were set up in 1982 to assist the 'integration' of young people in difficulty into society: they seek in effect to avoid the social exclusion of young people. Multi-functional, the Local Missions aim to provide an holistic service to meet such young people's needs. They work with the smaller, more locally based Offices for advice, information and guidance (*Permanence d'Acceuil d'Information et d'Orientation* (PAIO)) which target 16-25 year olds. The Local Missions are funded in equal part by the state, the region and the town.

(iii) By capitation payments, and by competition for preferred providers. An example of a provider receiving capitation payments includes *Retravailler* (back to work), a long-standing 'social enterprise' organisation which focuses on people over 25 returning to work which gets capitation payment for skills assessment work. *Retravailler* provides skills assessment for both the unemployed and employees. Originally it concentrated on women, but now 30% of its clients are men. It also offers training in how to adjust to change, transferable skills, communication skills and pre-training orientation concerning the labour market.

Retravailler receives 95% of its income from the State through a variety of sources including regional training budgets supported by the European Social Fund. It is the only organisation in France which charges a means-tested fee on the basis of family income for guidance and counselling. Its state funding is diminishing as the market for skills assessment becomes more competitive and as state funding is focused more on short-term results such as job placements secured rather than the more intangible personal development outcomes which the guidance counsellors are trying to achieve.

An example of competition for a 'preferred provider' is the National Employment Agency (ANPE), which registers unemployed people for work and provides a guidance service. Guidance has been an increasingly important aspect of the agency's work. However, up to 90% of careers guidance is carried out by outside professionals who work under a defined contract. There is a public competition for these contracts every two or three years. Up to 800 organisations compete and up to 200 are selected and put on the list of preferred providers. ANPE's own counsellors are involved in the assessment of the bidders and in quality evaluation of their services. *Retravailler* again provides services under this arrangement including 'deep counselling' services.

As in the UK and Germany, there are distinct differences between the services for young people and for adults. School-based career guidance is highly centralised and provided by civil servants who are employed by the Ministry of Education. For adults, services are divided between groups, principally the employed and unemployed. There is also a safety-net approach with special services to catch disadvantaged groups such as women and young people *en difficulte*, reflecting the long-standing concern in France about the 'social insertion' of turbulent youth. Overall, however, services for adults are much more developed and better supported in France than in the UK.

The French system, then, is characterised by a pluralistic, target-group-led pattern of provision by a range of organisations including many third-sector players. There has been much more emphasis on adult guidance than in the UK. While services for school-leavers are provided as a national public service, for adults a variety of quasi-market mechanisms have been developed since the early 1990s, based on competing non-profit associations and indirect funding through social insurance payment systems.

Conclusion

In the UK, guidance is a welfare service that appears to be in the process of becoming a quasi-market. This is indicated by the fact that providers are competing for contracts. Marketisation can be the first step on a path which logically will lead to eventual privatisation of service providers, to an inflow of private capital, and to a transition from formula funding and

capitation contracts to fee-paying and private insurance arrangements. In the UK, in many welfare services there are examples and signs that such 'creeping privatisation' may be occurring; in these cases, the quasi-market experiment is a transitional phenomenon which can be seen as a half way house to a real market. However, while in such welfare services the experiment may lead eventually to a much more privatised and individualised approach, quasi-markets do not necessarily become real ones. There is no sign of guidance services for young people moving to a real market. The issue of fee-charging is only a live one in relation to guidance for adults and even there it is hotly debated.

All three Member States that we have so far examined have moved at least some way along the quasi-market road. In Germany, most statutory provision remains within the public sector domain although some third-sector and private-sector players are beginning to find niches for a sustainable future from contracts from the state supplemented by European funding. Hence Germany has moved a little in the quasi-market direction but services are basically still state-controlled. France has moved further in the development of quasi-market but has only made tentative moves into a real market. Some guidance work for the unemployed remains within the public sector, but most of the organisations working in the field of adult guidance are independent non-profit social enterprises, funded by the state through a variety of contractual arrangements. The UK has moved the furthest in the quasi-market direction. Most statutory provision has been put out to tender by the state. In addition, vouchers have been used to pump-prime a real market for adult guidance provision.

Returning to the questions with which we begun this paper, we can see that the answer to the question 'who pays' for adult guidance in all three case study countries is the state, or the state in combination with the EC, employers or individuals. The pattern of provision varies considerably, however, in relation to the target group. Providers include the state, the third sector and the private sector. There are various models of the role of the guidance worker. The specific role adopted is in part at least dependent upon who is paying and the performance measurement systems in place. Moreover, while some providers focus exclusively on guidance, others have integrated guidance into other activities such as training and preparation for work.

Performance measures in the quasi-market context tend to focus on measurable outcomes rather than assessment of the effectiveness of a more nebulous, process-based activity. Health and education services are now wrestling with league-table driven output measures. In guidance work in the UK, capitation payment for careers guidance for young people is based on the completion by the clients of action plans. This creates a context in which action plans become a strong driver in professional/client interaction. The highly complex guidance process is thus rendered into an accountable measure. This issue of long-term effectiveness is of course highly problematic but a live issue in guidance (5). Few of the providers we have visited were in a position to assess the long-term effects of their intervention through, for example, cohort studies of 'graduates'. The criteria of success were identified as client demand, the securing of contracts, and satisfactorily reaching targets and other performance measurement mechanisms laid down by the purseholder.

What are suitable performance measures? Dilemmas faced by education and health services during their process of marketisation are already beginning to emerge. While there is 'special provision' for some client groups, there are clearly other groups who drop through the net.

Cream-skimming, a feature of quasi-markets, is already observable in the French adult guidance system where the unemployed most likely to be reintegrated into the labour market are targeted for special assistance in guidance.

What indications are there of a quasi-market developing into a real market, where clients pay for services? As yet there is little or no movement to a real market where individuals pay economic rates. However, by disaggregating activities that are encapsulated in the concept of guidance, a more complex picture emerges. While a commitment to free access to information may remain in all three Member States, fee-paying is discussed as a possibility by some providers in France where there is already a limited practice of charging for 'deep counselling'. So far though, in the French system, fee-paying plays only a limited role. In Germany, fee-paying is a recognised part of the system only for outplacement where the employer pays. In the UK, there are active debates about individual fee-paying. The Government view is that while information and an initial session or sessions should be free, follow-up, personalised advice should be chargeable (free entry, pay to stay) (CRAC/NICEC 1996; NACCEG 1996; Watts 1994). The justification given for this is the idea that whoever benefits should pay. While the economy and the market more generally benefit from the free flow of information, the emphasis switches to the individual becoming the main beneficiary in the case of one-to-one customised guidance and counselling. There is some robust opposition to the idea of fee-charging among many of the key actors and organisations. While some clients have in the past had the opportunity to pay with vouchers for services provided by competing providers, vouchers (a commonly used device in quasi-markets) now seem to be off the political agenda. However, there are opportunities for some clients to pay by cash for advice and the Government is encouraging providers to offer a fee-paying service. This would create a real (as opposed to a quasi-) market.

This account of our preliminary work draws attention to the conceptual complexity of the activity of guidance and the related difficulties incurred in measuring performance. Guidance includes the provision of information, counselling and couching in job-seeking skills. It can also encompass psychometric testing and skills assessment. Sometimes it incorporates placement of jobseekers and filling employers' vacancies. There are already indications that some providers are dividing these activities up and providing some themselves and contracting out others. Information provision may remain a statutory responsibility provided by the state, but other activities may increasingly be either contracted out and/or incur fee paying.

Finally, the question remains of whether the marketisation of careers services will yield improvements in any of the areas of concern to policymakers in evaluating quasi-markets; that is efficiency, responsiveness, choice and equity. As yet there is little evidence available to provide answers to this question. We can merely specify what key actors in the field identify as the live issues. There are certainly potential problems. Private providers may uncover many possible mechanisms for cream-skimming, so worsening the outcomes of a service provided in terms of equity. At the same time, increased government regulations which impose targets for service delivery (such as a number of action plan statements a company needs to produce), and reduced consultation times, may all lead to a reduction in the quality of service provided to some users. On the other hand, there are potential opportunities too. Funding available for target groups from the EC or the state at national, regional or local level may lead to more individualised provision for some. All this is in a context where guidance services have a wider range of opportunities to broker as a result of attempts to develop lifelong learning provision

and growing access to European datasets on education, training and labour market opportunities.

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Endnotes

1. Italy and the Netherlands are the two other Member States featured in this study but not in this paper.

2. An Institute of Careers Guidance survey in 1995 reported that '...93 out of 125 careers services offered some adult guidance outside their core contract' (CRAC/NICEC 1996:5).

3. This is clearly an important issue but one which we do not have space to address here. The Standing Conference of Associations for Guidance in Educational Settings (SCAGES) produced a statement on what they consider guidance to be which extends a UDACE (1986) list of seven components to include activities in educational settings (Annex I in Ball 1993).

4. The current crisis faced by such providers in Brandenburg is the overwhelming demand from the 'Volga Germans', who speak no German, but have exercised their right to return to their 'homeland' after their ancestors' departure to Russia three hundred years ago.

5. See Chapter 4 in Watts et al (1996) for a useful review and Watts (1996) for a discussion of this matter.

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CHAPTER TEN

EMPLOYABILITY VERSUS EMPLOYMENT
THE INDIVIDUAL AND ORGANISATIONAL CHALLENGE

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The New Deal[1]

The implicit agreement that employers provide security and promotion in exchange for hard work and commitment (the old psychological contract) has been shattered. Rapid change and restructuring, involving redundancies on a massive scale, has virtually eliminated the security and promotion side of it. This is the reality, but the downside of that reality is that morale and confidence inevitably plummet even amongst those who retain their jobs.

Ironically, the constant changes call for innovation and creativity, but the threat of job loss is apt to destroy that. Workers who are fearful of redundancy, and who think they are unlikely to find a job elsewhere, will try hard to do what is "right". That is, what has worked in the past. So an indirect effect of the need to change is that people won't change.

Employers are coming to realise that good morale is an asset, and refusing to nourish it has an economic cost. Offering "a job for the time being" and nothing else, is going to send the wrong messages, scattering those creative people who can find better offers, while the mediocre who remain retreat into their shells.

The only way forward is to form a new psychological contract which recognises needs and obligations on both sides. Employers need certain core competencies from their employees. These competencies will differ somewhat in different jobs (although some like communication skills, are universally required). Many employers are reluctant to support the development of competencies that seem irrelevant, but if they are too restrictive, employees will feel stultified, and will only stay if they lack the initiative to find something else. It is a way to self selecting low initiative people when there is a driving need for high initiative.

One thing that can be offered is the chance to enhance their employability (by coaching, mentoring, etc. across a wide range of skills). This will improve confidence levels, and with it the willingness to try things out. There is far more chance of an innovative approach.

But there can be a shadow side to employability drives. If employees are given *carte blanche* to develop however they wish, they might pursue self-interest to the point that they exclude others, so the enrichment that comes from cross-fertilisation of ideas is lost. In extremes, the relentless pursuit of individual goals pushes the organisational goals by the wayside.

The organisation may generate, for a short time, individuals who thrive on learning, but it stops there. To achieve a learning organisation (that is, one that transforms itself to meet ever changing market demands) you need people that learn in synergy, taking corporate objectives into account.

This means, that for success, individual needs and organisation goals must be aligned. The key needs involved in this process can be summarised as follows:

Organisations need to:

- create strong employee identification with business goals
- restore and build staff morale and confidence
- create flexible HR processes
- facilitate individual performance beyond the ordinary

- encourage innovation and business enhancing change

Individuals need to:

- keep their fingers on the pulse of change (inside and outside)
- build their future financial security
- continuously learn and enhance their employability
- maintain a healthy life-balance
- manage their own morale and deal with pressure positively

Systemic Career Management

It is clear that modern careers are more complex than those earlier. Talk of climbing the ladder no longer makes sense. It is more like creating a mosaic, selecting different elements at different times to make an evolving pattern. This has to be far more self-directed than previously, so continuous learning is vital to success.

Career management becomes a systemic continuous process. In today's organisations growth of value will only be achieved if there is a culture of reciprocal investment. Organisations invest in individual employability and the individual invests energy and creativity back into the company.

Each individual needs an employability strategy, which involves having a future vision. To achieve that vision they need to diagnose the gap between where they are now and where they want to be; and have a plan to bridge that gap. Taking a strategic view of one's own employability involves; firstly having a mindset, which is about investing in their inner security rather than relying on the organisation to provide external security. In short, this means fostering a belief that they own their own destiny.

Secondly, individuals need to develop self-management skills and strategies to manage their own employability. For example, they need to manage their own stress and morale, achieve an appropriate balance between their personal and work lives, keep their finger on the pulse of change, manage transitions and network in a strategic way. This is the necessary background for their learning, which needs to go beyond going on courses and reading books. They must be willing to learn how to learn for example, from mentors, from project work, and even from difficult relationships.

Finally individuals need to be aware of those competencies which are required to enhance both their internal and their external employability.

As mentioned previously, organisations also need a business strategy, which also is about diagnosing the gap between their current situation and their future vision. To fill that gap the strategy needs to engender a clear view of the critical future success competencies. The business strategy will also encompass HR systems which will create a flexible and optimum utilisation of people's skills and experience. Most importantly individual employability strategies, and business strategies must be aligned. A forum or series of forums need to be created where managers and individuals can have this alignment dialogue. This involves adult-adult open two-way communication about needs and wants and offerings on both sides.

Development plans will arise from this dialogue. Then there will be action which ultimately will feed back to individual and organisation strategies.

The role of HR will be as broker in this alignment dialogue. The key outcome of this systemic process will be a mutual contract - loyalty, commitment and high performance in exchange for opportunity for self-development and enhanced employability. This will reduce fear and increase resilience to change. Continuous learning to continuous improvement leads to increased wealth.

Key Interventions

The kinds of interventions that we are developing to help organisations achieve this alignment fall into five key areas:

Shared Vision: The first stage is to diagnose where the organisation is now and where it needs to be. This creates a vision, which, if there is to be a steady drive towards its fulfilment, needs to be shared. We can help with this by helping team leaders to develop their own vision, which creates team identity, allows individuals to advance within that vision. and ties in with the corporate vision.

Leadership: While individual learning is to be encouraged, self-interest must not be allowed to override the interests of the group. Leaders need to create an environment of shared learning and mutual exchange to optimise the organisational potential derived from individual learning. Managers will need coaching skills to have alignment dialogues.

Empowerment: Individuals can be helped to be enthusiastic learners and proactive self-developers. Self-managed learning programmes, action learning sets, independent counselling and coaching, life-balance programmes, can all be utilised in this way.

System Design: HR systems need to be created which reward the right things, i.e., high achievement, rather than position or status, that and core competencies across functional boundaries, and which acknowledge learning and encourage the development of employability. As well as this, career paths and development opportunities need to be open to everyone, not restricted by status and hierarchy. Everyone should have access to resources and opportunity. Development needs to be linked with other HR initiatives. Managers should be held accountable for development. Feedback systems need to be open and development-focused.

Continuous Improvement: Finally, audits and evaluation and monitoring systems should be in place to monitor the outcomes of the systemic career management process.

Conclusion

As we approach the end of the twentieth century the main feature of the work environment is its uncertainty. We have downsizing, mergers, acquisitions, outsourcing, flatter leaner structures, global markets and an explosion in information technology. All of these put pressure on individuals to learn and adapt on a continuous basis. There are large numbers of people who suffer mid-career blues because the career ladder has gone, third-age anxieties about finance, and even survivor syndrome. People who survive a downsizing do not necessarily feel lucky. Morale, trust and loyalty can be devastated. Progressive companies now see the importance of rebuilding the confidence of survivors. It is not good for business to be staffed by over-anxious people.

This rebuilding is unlikely to take the form of offering long-term job security. Change comes too rapidly to ensure anything except that change of personnel is likely.

The concept of employability implies a radical departure from the traditional relationship between the employer and the employee. The old way was a paternalistic structure where the employer looked after the welfare of the workers for as long as they did what they were told. Now that the idea of job security in one organisation has had to go, individuals need to manage their own careers. They need to develop skills and experiences which will be employable in the event of change. So individuals who take on board employability will ask "Whilst I'm with this organisation, will I grow, develop and become more employable, or will I stay the same or even stagnate?" The good employees will not be those who wait to be told what to do but those who actively seek personal growth and development. They will provide a great boost for the organisation, provided their personal goals are aligned with company goals. The good companies will be those that invest in individual development. Those that demonstrate their determination to do so will be able to recruit and retain the best. Hence the **New Deal** is one of mutual benefit. This adult-adult relationship is especially important in the UK economy which will only prosper if we build knowledge jobs. The alternative is a low-skill, low-pay culture, reminiscent of the third world.

Notes

1 The help of Dr Mike Bagshaw, Director of Development, Coutts Career Consultants, is gratefully acknowledged.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

JAPAN AS A LEARNING SOCIETY. AN OVERALL VIEW BY A EUROPEAN SOCIOLOGIST

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1. Introduction

In this paper I will examine the extent to which Japan has developed and is still developing a set of policies and practices that can go under the label of lifelong learning (LL hereafter). My perspective is sociological; therefore I will put some emphasis on the links between learning opportunities and social organization, as I subscribe both to the farsighted statement by Durkheim (1938) about the relationship between educational and societal change and to the way Carnoy and Levin (1976:31) describe how schools and education are embedded in society. Contrary to the usual approach where the educational and training system is considered on its own, I maintain that socialization to social and professional roles is shaped by underlying social arrangements; and this can be seen at different levels: the structure of the educational system, processes, actors involved, learning philosophies and outcomes.

Why consider Japan in a conference on LL in Europe? There are two reasons. The first is pragmatic: Japan is the second largest world market after the USA, with impressive achievements in industrial production. Many observers have pointed out that the competitiveness of Japanese firms is a result only partly of management principles and mainly the consequence of the clever and innovative application of general principles. My argument is that this clever and innovative application is the outcome of attitudes and behaviours which Japanese workers have learnt during their school years and continue to learn during their working life.

The second reason has to do with some particular features of Japanese society which - while sharing many traits of capitalist western societies - has some values and practices of its own that seem to make the difference in the learning field. The description of the provisions in the field of LL can provide some sort of yardstick for evaluating, discussing and re-thinking the actual performance of European Learning Societies. It is well known that the analysis of social institutions can profit from a comparison with other countries' institutions; up to some years ago that meant comparing a European country with other European countries or with USA; today a global perspective requires us to consider non-western countries such as Japan. It seems important to include Japan in this sort of comparison because we have reason to believe that - although with specific national differences - other East Asian countries will follow and adopt some of the Japanese arrangements in the fields of educational and industrial organization.

What is a learning society? (LS hereafter). What are its distinctive features? These days nearly every country can maintain she has established a system of lifelong learning, as many provisions for adult and continuing education are available to larger and larger groups of the population. So what distinguishes a learning society in a formal sense from another one that can be said to be a learning society in a substantive sense? I suggest two conditions: first, the actual participation of the population in learning activities and, second, the image that public opinion has about the educational system in general, i.e. the social representation of learning. The latter is difficult to measure, while the former can be estimated to a certain extent. Of course there is no "one best way to LL": local as well as academic and social traditions play a role. Moreover, the concept itself can reach different latitudes and boundaries in different countries. We might say that, while there has been much talk recently about learning societies, some countries already and for a long time (probably before the term LL and the debate arose) have been examples of a LS; on the other hand, some countries where the term is often cited,

can be very weak indeed. In the latter instance in fact we see a tendency to make a "symbolic use of LL (or LS) policy", which is virtually unknown in the former.

I often find that academics or consultants who write on Japan take a definite stance: they tend to be overtly pro (the majority) or clearly against (a minority, the so called Japan-bashers) . One of the reasons might be that Japan is far from the western frame of reference and any analysis is likely to push the observer (consciously or not) to some sort of judgement. As to myself, in writing this paper I have tried to be objective; I have visited Japan twice for a total of six months and what follows is the result of reading the literature and discussions with Japanese colleagues. A good number of books and articles on the Japanese educational system and related matters is now available in English and some of them can be considered a reliable basis for cumulative, incremental work.

An important aspect that arises when considering Japanese institutions is the degree of continuity and the degree of change the observer assumes has taken place. Present-day students often concentrate on contemporary dynamics. Be it in the field of economics, sociology or management sciences, there is a tendency to describe what is going on now, with less attention paid to a wider perspective - historical or theoretical. We know instead that today's behaviours and trends are rooted in past events, rules and customs. This is specially true for schooling and education that change slowly in any country. True, change does take place even in educational systems, but this happens at a much slower pace than is maintained in official speeches, for instance by government officials (from the perspective of the symbolic use of politics) or by the press. In other words, if generally substantive and quick departures from well-established educational and learning practices cannot be expected in any country, I would say that this is particularly true for Japan.

The main conclusions that can be anticipated here are that in Japan:

- there is a particular way of thematizing lifelong learning more as a form of consumption than as a form of investment;
- adult learning, as it is known in western countries *sub specie* skill formation and updating, is thoroughly achieved in the workplace not only at the beginning of a working life but throughout the length of a career;
- the performance of the school system paves the way for the development of learning attitudes which are used later at different stages of life.

In the following notes an attempt is made to restate briefly the main points of these three areas and to pull them together. In sections 2 and 3 I will introduce the two main areas of LL practice that can be found in contemporary Japan, namely lifelong education and skill formation and training. LL is embedded in society and its adult clients have experienced schooling. I maintain that their educational experience largely influences the way citizens look at, and avail themselves of, LL opportunities: that is why sections 4 and 5 recall those aspects of Japanese schools and universities which are relevant to our topic. Finally, a brief concluding remark is given and a short glossary of Japanese LL terms is provided.

2. Lifelong learning policy in Japan: present issues and trends

In Japan LL stands for an array of learning activities, which can only loosely be connected

with productivity and skills. In western everyday language the concept of lifelong learning is very often associated with the need to cope with economic problems (e.g. restructuring, retraining) or with social problems (e.g. ageing). In other words, the economic implications of LL are underlined in the west.

In Japan LL is considered a very important concept, but it does not necessarily possess this instrumental flavour. True, LL includes a wide range of learning activities including school education, higher education, non-formal and informal education, professional/vocational education and training, and cultural/sporting activities. However, in the social representation the public has of LL, culture/sport and leisure oriented activities play a central role; consequently, the well known enterprise-based, in-service training and the professional/vocational education are - mostly unconsciously - excluded (Okamoto, 1994). That is why the policy statements put forward by public bodies, especially local councils in charge of LL, focus not on the contribution to the economy or human resources development, but on aspects of mental satisfaction with daily life, switching so to speak from "economic wealth" to "mental wealth".

From this perspective, "lifelong learning is - in the image of the Japanese - consumption in economic terms, while in most of the other developed countries it is rather investment for the sake of economic benefits in the future for both the individual and the country" (Okamoto, 1994:7). The fact that in Japan such activities as sport, recreation, outdoor activities, hobbies, volunteering, etc. are considered LL is also a consequence of the emphasis the Japanese put on spiritual development and character building, a function performed by high schools (see section 4). They tend to believe that education should not be tied to economic issues.

This position is reflected in official statements: of the three main reasons given for an active policy in order to achieve a learning society, the necessity to cope with social, economic and technological change is but one and probably not the most important. The other two are: a) the need to overcome the side effects of the so called 'diploma-oriented' society and b) the need to provide learning opportunities that can match the growing demand for leisure-oriented learning activities. We can add that this emphasis on policies and activities of a non-productive and non-instrumental type is possible because a large amount of provision in terms of training and retraining for economic and productive purposes is already secured by a smooth performing of On the Job Training which is embedded in the peculiar Japanese employment system and by the school system *stricto sensu*, as we shall see later on.

Let us examine now in detail the three reasons that provide the framework for present-day policies. The first and probably foremost preoccupation of the Japanese authorities was (and still is) the overstress which is laid on initial formal education and on its *allonge*, the well known critical phase of entrance exams. In other words there is an attempt to spread learning more evenly along the lifespan, de-emphasizing the middle and high school period of learning, and partly the one which takes place at higher education level. According to Okamoto, Japanese society is more a diploma-oriented society rather than a lifelong learning society; as in the work of Randall Collins, we could say that Japanese society is a good example of a Credential Society (Collins, 1978) at the highest level. One consequence is a social climate in which a person's overall value or image depends mostly on the name of the university where he/she graduated. Another side effect is that the experience of high school is nastily affected by the competition for entrance examinations and students are more interested in being trained to

answer the tricky questions of the coming exams than to increase their knowledge and attitudes to learn critically.

So, in the official view, a LL Society is expected first of all to counterbalance the weight of formal schooling, its concentration in the teenage years and the way public opinion comes to rely on it. LL policies are aimed at promoting other learning activities and at establishing new yardsticks to evaluate the outcomes of these other learning activities. In fact the official definition runs as follows: "A LL Society is a society in which one can freely choose various learning opportunities anytime in one's life and the outcomes of such learning are appreciated properly". But according to Japanese observers this view is still far from being widely implemented.

Let us look at the second official aim of the LL policy: the need to expand different sorts of learning opportunities that can be enjoyed by different social groups and social strata. It seems that at a certain point between late 1970s and early 80s a demand was growing for learning activities which might be more rewarding intellectually and which improved the quality of life. This process gained momentum hand in hand with the economic miracle and it seems that there has been a warm acceptance and enthusiasm for those activities aimed at increasing mental satisfaction in daily life, developing curiosity and satisfying cultural aspirations. During that time culture/sport and leisure oriented activities became almost a synonym for LL. By the same token, a large number of Japanese came to believe that formal education in schools and enterprise-based professional/vocational training were not part and parcel of LL provision. This second target, and the way it is perceived, tells us a lot about the importance of social representation of an important institution such as LL as it takes a different form in different countries.

A third official aim is assigned to LL policy in Japan, and it is the most common one in European countries: in terms of investment, learning activities are carried on to renew and redevelop the knowledge and skills of the labour force. But this area seems to lag behind the other two, for the reasons that have already been mentioned and because this function has already been accomplished (see section 3). Moreover, remember that the Japanese do not like to link educational issues with economic issues.

If we review the above mentioned aims from a western standpoint, some issues emerge. What the Japanese expect from LL policies is rather different from expectations in the West. They are at a different stage of economic and educational organization, which does not mean necessarily better off in every aspect. As to the labour force Japan has already attained a stage of high functional development in the production sphere, so further developments are expected from LL in an holistic perspective, looking for personal fulfilment and development, which is an aim that every policy maker, businessman or trade unionist in Europe would subscribe to unless more basic and structural problems had still to be resolved. But the implementation of this Japanese policy seems difficult. We can say that the results are not there yet, while a strong effort is being made in terms of promoting the policy.

Another point emerges when examining the Japanese case. The economic/instrumental perspective which seems to take centre stage in Europe is probably not the final target: personal, intellectual development is going to be the all-inclusive aim that we can foresee in the medium-long term. Economic, functional attainment *per se* can be unsatisfactory; the

attempt in Japan to steer LL from credential-industrial purposes towards broader ones testifies - albeit implicitly - to the fact that the economic outcome has been reached in many cases at high human cost. One might wonder how many people will want to engage in learning activities after retiring. I met, for example, people over 60 (one man as a matter of fact was 74) who had learned the English language during the last three years, after retiring, speaking fluently enough to help the foreigner. Certainly, on the implementation side many aspects have still to be analysed: the role of private actors and of the local authorities, the different reactions of various social groups, in sum all those pedagogical matters connected with the fact that the age of the customers of LL provision spans if not from alpha to omega at least, say, from 20 to 70.

In sum, from a European point of view we can acknowledge that Japan, in spite of doing well in LL, does not stay idle, eager as she is to participate internationally. Let us now briefly review the "investment" side of LL, i.e. the training and skill formation process, the feature of the Japanese productive system which is so popular around the world and especially in countries where Japanese transplants have taken root, as in Britain. The examination of the attainments in this sector will help to explain why the Japanese can, so to speak, "indulge" in stressing so much the "consumption" side of LL.

3. Learning on the job

In spite of the Japanese attitude of dismissing training and skill formation activities as not connected or related to LL, they provide real opportunities for learning for a great deal of the workforce. Some features of the Japanese workforce are something of a myth in the West. While it has to be remembered that Japan is not on top of every ranking concerning human resources, there is a wide convergence among observers, students and consultants that the labour force and the employment system constitute - among others - a pivotal factor of Japanese competitiveness. There are several accounts of how learning is carried on in Japan, the most well known being the one by Dore and Sako (1989), more recent one by Sako (in Aoki & Dore eds., 1993) and also one by myself (1995). Therefore I will not recall micro level details, although it is an interesting field of research which deserves to be deeply investigated. Too many consultants in organisational development in fact pretend to apply the Japanese model without the critical support of Japanese-style training and skill formation.

Here I will sketch why and how training and skill formation became a powerful way of learning in the Japanese industrial environment to such an extent that a researcher suggests naming the process "On the Job *Learning*" instead of "On the Job *Training*". In his words, "skill formation is not the Japanese equivalent, interpretation or translation of the western concepts of 'vocational training' or 'skill training' or 'technical education'. The Japanese concept of skill formation embraces the idea of education, training, experience and personal development. It is a holistic concept" (Ford, 1987). The topic is huge and cannot be treated in full here: I will only stress some relevant points.

First, training is not expected to come from schools

While in other countries companies look for as many skills as they can find in the worker, in Japan it is implied that training will be provided by the hiring firm which therefore in the hiring/selection process will concentrate on the "trainability" of the candidate, i.e. his or her

ability to learn and personality factors. The signal that indicates the trainability is the prestige of the high school or of the university where the candidate graduated. In Japan the long term perspective is the norm; the reader might have heard the phrase "the Japanese think long term". This is especially true in labour relations. Although recently news emerged that lifelong employment had been given up at certain locations, in large firms (and in the public sector too) recruitment is for life. For this reason the resources spent in training are bound to stay in the firm: the more learning takes place at the individual level, the more the firm will be well equipped. This is obviously true in as much as the worker stays with the firm. We know that in the west the worker does not feel obliged to stay if another firm offers a higher salary, and nobody has anything to say if that happens; in the words of Dore, in the West we are more "Market oriented" while the Japanese are "Organization oriented" (Dore, 1987).

Second, job rotation is critical to learning

Frequent retraining is considered to be a necessary part of a normal career; this can be done in a very informal way through mutual teaching, by a more experienced worker, or through job rotation. Rotation can be induction rotation, when the employee enters the firm, or long-term rotation at certain stages of the working life. The main purpose of rotation is to achieve flexible worker deployment which is very useful when substitution or coverage of absent people are necessary. But rotation has another outcome: when everyone understands everyone else 's job (because he or she has performed it for a certain period of time) a higher degree of co-operation is achieved. Rotation is costly of course, and can be resisted but provides a continuous opportunity for learning how to perform in manufacturing, designing, shipping and so on. Note that this overall knowledge, which is not limited to a group of tasks, brings blue collar jobs to a position very close to that of white collars. Koike (1993) refers to the concept of unusual operation, the division between production and maintenance, integrated vs. separated systems. Koike shows that those who can undertake more tasks tend to be assessed highly; ordinary output was achieved when the operators were able to handle problems skilfully. Remember that skill formation, while being carried out mainly on the job, can also take place via "short inserted off the job training", that is a period of some days (up to one week) aimed at theorizing and systematizing the practical experience. In brief, skills are necessary, skills are developed and skills are paid for accordingly.

Third, pay depends not only on merit and grade, but on skill as well

This is probably the main reason why the Japanese continue to learn well beyond the point in which workers of other countries have stopped. Note that all three elements upon which remuneration is determined encourage the workers to acquire skills and particularly intellectual ones, in the sense of Koike. Grade of pay reflects skill (or experience, which is a form of consolidated learning) so the worker will want to acquire skill in order to advance in the job; yearly increments encourage long-term commitment and therefore skill and knowledge acquisition; merit assessment is based on the worker's skills, which are evaluated in a complicated but apparently fair manner: so the worker will be willing to augment such a skill.

Fourth, the exchange of information improves learning

Learning implies knowledge of the context and of the environment, so learning in organizations implies being acquainted with the organization. One of the most important parts

of OJT is to study problems which arise at the shop-floor level. As a common practice, workers have to write short reports about problems they might encounter, stating how they have dealt with such problems in the past and what remains to be done; such reports are usually discussed in shop-floor meetings and informally after work hours: the outcome is that everyone improves his working knowledge of the whole organization. The larger the knowledge about the functioning of machinery, the more likely the person can cover different posts, improving his command of sizeable parts of the production process. Learning does not depend only on sitting close to experienced workers; another way of acquiring skill is tied to maintenance: "Originally, mending machinery was solely the work of production men. Now, first production workers watch the maintenance workers at work, then they proceed to take part in the work, and finally they do it largely by themselves, although extremely difficult problems still require the maintenance workers' expertise." (Koike, 1993:49).

Fifth, quality circles are a major way to continue to learn

Quality circles have been seen in Europe as more of an imposition than an opportunity, but they are part of the process of continuous improvement in Japanese companies. The real content of quality circles is a learning process: it implies the definition of the problem, using statistical tools, and the development of viable solutions; again, it implies the exchange of information and the growing awareness of specific and general knowledge. Participants are often directed to the technical sections of bookstores to buy manuals in order to solve problems discussed in quality circles. This is a sign of a self-reliant attitude towards learning which is probably the consequence of the awareness of being able to overcome so many hurdles and obstacles as a student previously (a self reliance which is often not present at a social or relational level).

Sixth, trainers are motivated to train

The main motivating factor for trainers is that the way a senior trains his juniors is one of the criteria by which the senior will be rated when a promotion is going to be granted. On the other hand, seniors do not fear the competition of the juniors to whom they have passed on their knowledge because promotion on the shopfloor is constrained by seniority. Trainers have a special status: strictly speaking, there are not persons whose job is only training, a position which is typical of Europe, although to a lesser extent in Germany. As everybody expects to be a learner, everybody knows that he will have to perform - from time to time - the role of the teacher.

Seventh, government incentives are available

The role of the state is relevant in the learning sector. Under the 1984 Vocational Training Act, employers can apply for a subsidy of 1/4 or 1/3 of their contributions towards the cost incurred by their employees in taking correspondence courses. The popularity of these courses rests on the fact that many of them prepare the students for a national qualifying examination or skill test. This is again an area of continuous learning: some professional groups have to study and take examinations administered by the State or by public bodies because the law or a customer or a quality assurance association (which usually in turn represents customers) ask the employer to have someone with that qualification on the books.

Last but not least, we should bear in mind that all these activities constitute the informal education offered to working people. But there is also what is termed 'refresher education', that is courses of various duration and usually carried on at night time offered to adults by universities and colleges, mainly at postgraduate level. The main aim is to offer a second chance in order to lower the emphasis on initial learning and on the exam syndrome. Mainly seen as investment, examples are: night and part-time courses, courses given by open-university-type institutions, and technology oriented independent college courses. Refresher education constitutes the *magna pars* of LL in Japan together with social education.

To sum up: learning opportunities are widespread; learning in Japan is not optional nor is it left to the preferences of personnel directors. Being part and parcel of the employment system, it is managed as any other division: workers have to learn in order to be flexible and redeployable and to see their wages rise. Companies and the industrial relations system help a lot in mobilizing (i.e. bringing into circulation, developing activities at different stages) the highest degree of learning opportunities for citizens. That is the reason why we can say that Japanese society is a LS. Should I have a son about to enter the labour market, I would like him to start working in a Japanese-style environment: this is the place where a graduate can learn a lot. I said a son, not a daughter: in fact the overall picture might appear better than it is in reality because the described provisions are reached by only one part of the working population, namely those employed in large companies and in the public sector. Moreover, as the rate of employment is different for women and women are very often in part-time positions (Brinton, 1993), we have to recognize that the various learning opportunities available to men in the Japanese productive system are not available to all women.

If we compare the way we deal with training and skill formation, we think more in terms of off-the-job training, often in classrooms located far from the workplace. Often the indicator of training activity in the west is the average amount spent per worker or the average number of days of training per worker, per year. Both measures - unavailable in Japan - convey very little about the real involvement and the real outcomes of learning. We assume training is necessary, in a techno-functionalist perspective, but the budget for this activity is the first to be cut when costs have to be reduced. But the main points are a) that pay in the west is job related, so - the argument goes from the point of view of the European worker - why learn more and perform better if this effort is not likely to be rewarded? And b) we assume that workers are bound to leave if they find a company which pays more for the skills we have contributed. This assumption very often comes true, together with the additional one which claims that the worker will shirk, should the opportunity to do so arise. These are not enviable features of the "market oriented" environment in the west.

In concluding this section we can state once again that learning is not something that can be achieved "by decree": underlying conditions such as proper management are important, but another critical element behind the positive attitude toward learning shown by the Japanese is some sort of precondition: this element is a positive, rewarding school experience (the exams being an issue apart). To this topic we now turn.

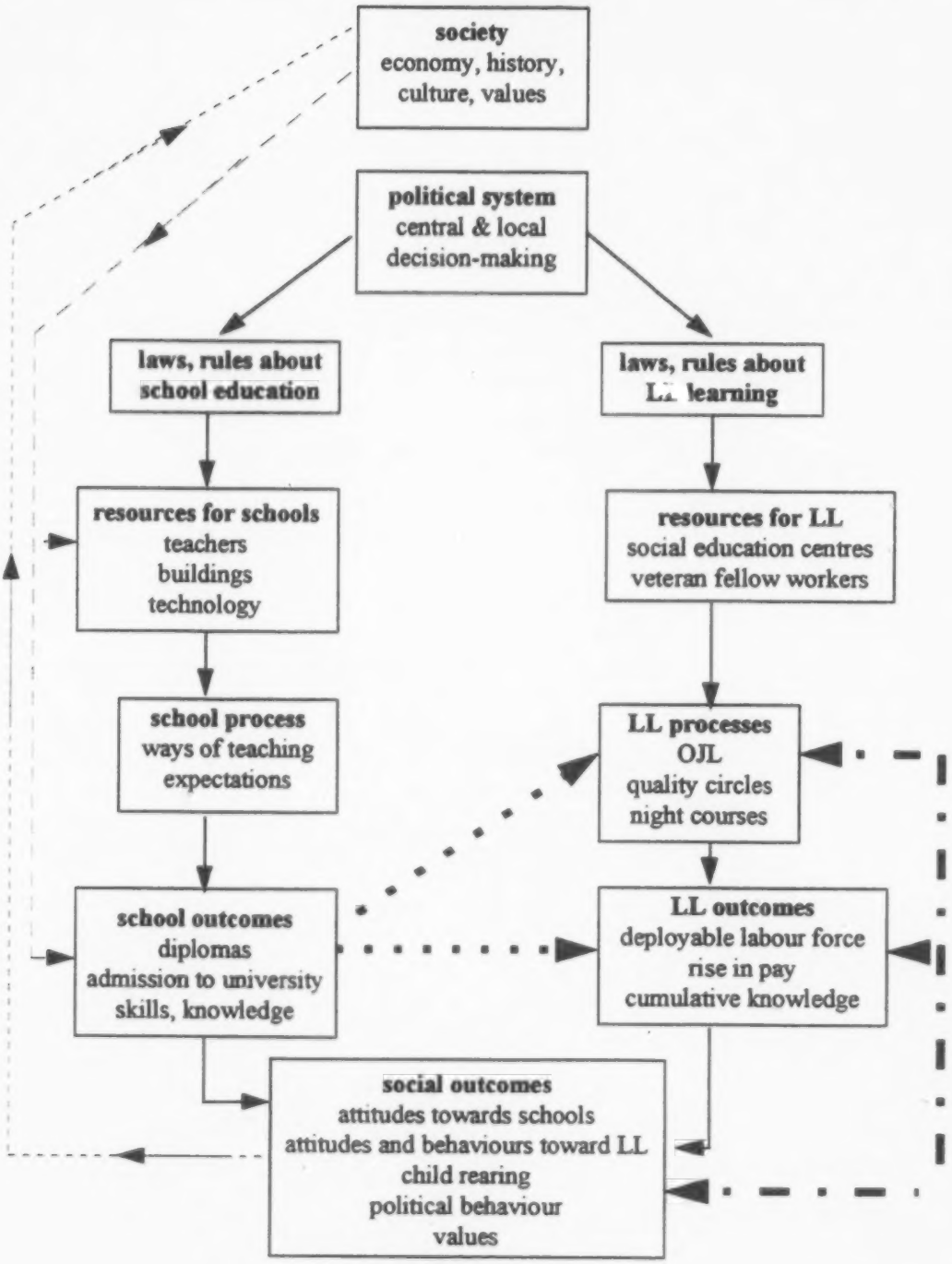
4. The background experience of schooling: quantitative indicators and qualitative outcomes

Lifelong learning stresses adult learning which takes place after the school years, but adult, lifelong learning cannot be treated as completely separate from school experience. This intuitive but often neglected assumption is apparent if one looks at the following diagram which helps to summarize what I have said so far and puts into proper perspective the following section.

The lines of influence are as follows. Society sets up a regulating sytem, namely a political system in which law and rules concerning the educational system are enacted. Then, in both sectors, rules produce downstream consequences, following the arrows from the top (———— lines) down to social outcomes. But various bodies in society are able to exert influence also indirectly (— — — — — lines). In a feed-back process social outcomes influence society (- - - - - - - - - - lines). A particular influence, most notable for the present analysis, stems from school outcomes and impinges on LL process and LL outcomes (▪ ▪ ▪ ▪ ▪ lines). Social outcomes also influence LL (▬ ▪ ▬ lines).

It is not possible to understand the phenomenon properly without a basic knowledge of how the school system works. In fact there is wide consensus among observers of Japanese schools that the school experience is pleasant and rewarding to pupils, while transmitting knowledge and building character (Lewis, 1996; Rohlen & Le Tendre, 1996). The Japanese school becomes a solid point of reference for the adolescent, a place where he/she can find support, play sports, and play an instrument; in short, one of the structures towards which the pupil develops a sense of belonging, of "togetherness" (Dore in Aoki & Dore, 1994). So it is part of the social outcome of the Japanese school system to develop a positive attitude towards learning after school. Also, it seems that the very same values typical of positive experiences in high school - gratification, group work, self betterment - are transmitted to the work environment.

Flow Chart



Source: adapted and developed from Carnoy & Levin, 1976

Let us have a look at the quantitative results of Japanese and European schools.

Table 1 - Educational Indicators: secondary education
(percentages, 1992)

		Japan	Italy	France	Germany	UK	OECD Countries
rate of enrolment at:							
age 15		97	na	94	93	99	93
age 16		95	na	92	95	75	87
age 17		90	na	87	93	55	75
upper secondary completion (h.s. graduates/theoretical age of graduation)							
general	boys	64	15	27	23	59	34
	girls	71	29	37	25	69	44
vocational	boys	25	41	48	88	18	48
	girls	25	33	44	82	15	43

Source: OECD-CERI Education at a glance. OECD Indicators, 1995, pp. 135, 214.

Data regarding formal schooling show that the rate of enrolment stays high up to the last year of high school and, it is worth noting, this result was achieved ten years ago. From a quantitative point of view, the Japanese education system not only brings into high schools (and the 12th grade) nearly all the relevant age group in spite of the fact that compulsory schooling stops at the 9th grade, but also keeps virtually the totality of them in school. This implies that pupils undergo a longer exposure to education than elsewhere.

A **qualitative** achievement consists in the high average of attainment reached by Japanese students; in other words, the majority of high school leavers have a reasonably good command of various subjects and of the basics of socialization. This has two consequences: when hiring, a company can go pretty safely below the second quartile; and in everyday life it is very uncommon to meet undersocialized people who can make you uneasy in social interaction. School is a place where pupils grow (Rohlen, 1983; Rohlen & LeTendre, 1996) with the strong support of their teachers. But let us distinguish by level: kindergarten reflects the loving attitude this country has towards small children; at this stage they are very free, at home as well as at school; the notion of childhood in Japan owes a great deal to spontaneity, energy and brightness. This means that in kindergarten and in the first years of elementary school pupils are likely to unleash their energies, they are not constrained. Towards the end of primary school and in the middle school (i.e. when the pupils are 13-15 years old) adulthood is approached in very particular ways: the values implied in guidance are stressed at this early point, much earlier than in western countries (LeTendre, 1996). The high school is something which puzzles the observer because of its "change of gear" in comparison with previous settings: the teenager is confronted with more and more challenging tasks, often in a week-long, demanding timetable. This is the place where endurance is slowly but inexorably filtered

by school as well as **juku** teachers, and is learnt by pupils who bring it as a *forma mentis* to their future work.

Now the main question that comes to the outsider's mind is: what helps to generate the high average quality of Japanese School outcomes? This is a good question because the answer also provides some clues for a proper understanding of the qualitative outcomes. In other words, the actors involved - especially teachers - and their educational practices are at the root of **quantitative** results and are also responsible for the relevant, Japanese specific **qualitative** outcomes.

Let us assume that learning is a function of: capacity, intensity, time and resources, in a formula: L = f (capacity) (intensity) (time) (resources).

While, of course, basic capacity is the same in Japan as in other countries, here that capacity is enhanced by very egalitarian and emotionally supportive primary and middle schools: pupils learn to work in groups, to control their emotions and to endure progressively more demands put upon them. At high school pupils are confronted with a basically traditional way of following lectures passively while those bound for university have to cope with tiring individual preparation. We can see here the mix of collective and individual effort which is required of an ordinary Japanese citizen/worker and that is responsible for the personal involvement in age-long learning.

Intensity is critical because it can counterbalance low capacities or nullify high capacities. We have reason to believe that intensity is at the highest level in Japan because motivation is kept high by motivated teachers, exams are threatening all the time, and pupils are anxious to show what they can do. Again, a learnt endurance plays an important role here. One risk is that in spite of high intensity results do not come and frustration sets in with bad consequences for those not so well equipped at the psychological level.

Time is obviously involved: the more time we devote to learning, the more we are likely to learn. In this respect Japanese society scores very highly: it can be assumed that the combined effect of a longer school year and of extra-curriculum learning (various activities preparing for entrance exams, **juku**, and so on) can be estimated as the equivalent of between two and three years of schooling (Rohlen, 1993). Of course, time can mean very little if the quality of the teaching and of the resources is unknown. But - other things being equal - time is a key factor.

Last comes the quality of educational resources: teachers first of all, but also books, audio visual aids, computing facilities, pedagogical techniques and so on. The quality of teachers can be rated as high on average, if we stick to such indicators as pay level and the position of the teaching profession in a ranking of professions.

Although with a certain degree of inequality (gender, social class, urban/rural environment), we could say that Japanese schools cater the best for the most. In other words a lot is offered to the largest quota of the population. As there is no formal tracking, students who do not follow are allowed ..... not to follow. The trick is entrance exams: those who want to go on into higher education have to prepare for it; and many want to, so many study a lot and learn a lot. We might say that the entrance exam system is at the root of the learning which is

mobilized by those who proceed to higher education. And the dedication of teachers is the main factor at the root of the learning acquired by those who go to work.

Are there any costs, shortcomings or backlashes? Yes, there are some and they can be viewed as the excesses of strong points. For instance students study very assiduously and take part in afternoon club activities. Seeing the school as a place where one can go irrespective of curricular engagements, on Saturday and Sunday as well, is definitely a strong point . But the weak point is that sometimes one hears the symptoms of overload (*Japanese Times*, Oct. 8 1996). Or take another example: there is an attitude among the Japanese of not overrating themselves, thinking that they are performing pretty well but feeling they can do better. This is a powerful instrument for constantly improving performance and something that helps in not taking competitors for granted, be they other schools' sports team or other countries. The weak point is that this awareness of not being at the top sometimes brings an attitude of undervaluing one's own assets, of worrying about being inadequate: in brief, some lack of self-esteem.

What does this experience tell us? Which questions can we ask ourselves if we compare the Japanese school system with western ones? What are we doing in our schools to foster a positive and long lasting attitude towards learning? Are we aware of the assumptions on which our teaching is based? What are the consequences in terms of LL capacity?

Western Schools	**Japanese Schools**
- develop the person **per se**	develop the person as a member of society
- stress independence	stress belonging, togetherness
- prize the critical student	value uniformity
- look for the excellent performer	look for the majority performing medium-high
- rely strongly on public sector	rely on a mix of public and private resources
- knowledge and skill from school	knowledge from school, skill from work
- interruption between school and work	continuity between school and work
- school experience is not gratifying	school experience is remembered as rewarding

5. The not-so-easy to frame university years

The data regarding higher education attendance in Japan are as follows.

Table 2 - Educational indicators: universities
(percentages, 1992)

	Japan	Italy	France	Germany	UK	OECD Countries
entry to higher education						
non-university type						
boys	19	1	16	11	10	12
girls	41	1	19	14	11	15
university-type						
boys	34	41	27	45	28	30
girls	16	41	35	25	26	28
higher education graduation						
bachelor						
boys	32	1	na	na	21	13
girls	14	1	na	na	20	14
master						
boys	3	9	13	15	8	8
girls	1	10	16	10	7	7

Source: OECD-CERI Education at a glance. OECD Indicators, 1995, pp. 150, 218.

As we can see in the table above, a higher percentage of freshmen enter higher education in Japan, both at two or three-year colleges and four-year universities: together they score a powerful 53% for males and 57% for females. A differentiation emerges according to gender: girls go to non-university higher education at twice the rate of males, while the percentage of men is twice that of women at university-type higher education. This is important and tends to be overlooked by sympathetic observers. Notice that this differential treatment is supported by families and possibly internalized by the female population.

The differences in population attending university in Japan tell us a lot about internal differentiation: as in any country from the United States to Italy, higher education institutions are not the same, they are not homogeneous. They are differentiated, although not in the same way as in Europe: for instance, the public universities in Japan are more highly valued. As already set out, there is a huge gender stratification in higher education in Japan. More than 90% of junior college students are female while they represent only 30% at the four-year universities. Female students tend to concentrate on humanities and education: very few take up engineering and science subjects; while this is common in other countries, is of interest to compare the number of engineering graduates and the percentage of females across countries in 1992. Germany produced 33,100 of which 7.6% were female, UK 32,700 of which 26.4% were female and Italy 7,900 of which 8.5 were female. Japan in contrast produced 103,300, of which 3.8% were female. Remember that the UK, Germany and Italy have more or less the same population, but Japan has nearly double the population of any of the three European

countries.

Students of science disciplines maintain that - while humanities students take university rather easily - this is not true for them. But a recent survey in **Science Magazine** (October 4 1996) on Japanese science faculties seems to demonstrate that, while things are now changing, low standards have been pretty common up to recently. As a matter of fact, the most productive laboratories in Japan are in companies rather than in universities.

As to social sciences and humanities, ethnographic or participant observation data are not available and of course we cannot generalize, but sources (Rohlen, 1993; Okamoto, 1992) tend to emphasize the relaxed atmosphere which is dominant in such faculties. As the key point is the name and the ranking of the University from which one graduates, there is no need to work hard. The access to a rewarding job is secured (or excluded) at the moment of entrance to university. It is as if recruiting companies accept at face value the degree of trainability of the candidates as it appears from the admission exam to university, while what happens during university, the standard of university learning and socialization is considered irrelevant. In considering this aspect we have to remember the preference of firms for On the Job Learning strategies.

Perhaps we can look for some indicators that can help to depict the quality of learning in Japanese universities and by the same token help us to understand how the situation compares with the universities of the West. Here is a tentative list:

- the degree of in-breeding of professors
- the number of publications in international, refereed journals
- the degree of moonlighting of professors
- the ratio of Japanese abroad to foreigners in Japan.

This is not to say that Japanese universities are inefficient or malfunctioning; quite the contrary, there is reason to believe that the wide, differentiated array of Japanese institutions is serving the productive system very well (so they probably minimize the transaction costs). They could do better, in comparison with other segments of the system, but imbalances between segments of the same national educational system are found everywhere. Another learning opportunity has to be recalled here, the University of the Air, founded in 1981, and now working on a Television Channel.

It is time now to summarize the role of schooling and university in Japan as the building blocks and preconditions of a LL Society. Learning in Japan has many common traits with learning in the West and in the meantime has some specificity. This specificity comes from Japan's historical background and religious influence. The educational and learning practices, as we have seen, are not - technically speaking - anything special. What apparently makes the difference are some cultural and societal traits that strongly support the aims and the functioning of the educational system. We might put things as follows: the educational system is effective in transmitting some particular values and attitudes; by the same token, society fosters and develops these values and builds upon them. These influences can be seen in a straightforward way in the flow chart in section 4. It is more the different attitude towards the school system that makes the difference, and this feature strikes the foreign observer. For the rest, a school is a school, a teacher is a teacher, a labour market is a labour

market in Japan just as in the West.

It might be interesting to recall that, while in the West competition is growing as grades rise, in Japan the degree of stress and fatigue on students can be represented by an inverted U shaped curve; namely, stress is low at the beginning (elementary school and the first years of middle school), it begins to grow from the last year of middle school, it reaches a peak in the last years of high school owing to entrance exams, it starts declining on entry to university and definitely declines once the non-written rules of university attendance are understood. The final result is commendable: data on the educational attainment of the working population show a highly educated society.

Table 3 - Educational Attainments of the population aged 25 to 64.
(percentages, 1989)

	Japan	Italy	France	Germany	UK	
primary	--	44	24	--	--	
lower secondary	30	30	26	22	35	
upper secondary	48	20	33	61	48	
H.E. (non university)		8	--	7	7	6
H.E. (university)	13	6	7	10	9	
other		1	--	3		1
TOTAL	100	100	100	100	100	

Source: OECD-CERI Education at a glance. OECD Indicators, 1993, pp. 23

6. A concluding remark

In this paper I have examined an example of a country where the aim of lifelong learning has been partly reached to a reasonable extent and partly is still under construction and continuous revision. Of course other countries have developed to a certain extent LL provisions and there is no point in trying to set out some sort of ranking. Quite simply, looking at a concrete example of a country that can be considered very close to a LS, might be of help in understanding ways and means by which other countries could administer and evaluate their own system of LL, test the assumptions on which they rest, and possibly develop their system.

Conclusions can be summarized as follows; Japan has apparently succeeded so far in:

- providing school services for all in a manner that seems to be enjoyed by pupils
- giving the school system a high status, something which seems to be lacking in the West
- providing many opportunities for adult learning
- encouraging job training and vocational training as part and parcel of industrial policy.

By attaining the above named outcomes Japan has succeeded in:

- transforming individual learning into organizational and societal learning

- leveraging the educational system for competitiveness.

It is an interesting example of a learning society because the micro level (individual) and the macro level (societal, organizational) interact fruitfully: the more a society is able to translate the former into the latter, the more this society constitutes a successful example of a learning society. As a matter of fact we have seen that in Japan many opportunities arise for someone to learn not only when he or she is in his or her teens or early twenties but also later in life. For instance having a child in school very often means to continue learning (Allison, 1996). Moreover, one's own profession often requires one to undergo refreshment courses. But the main point is that all this seems to be linked and achieved through motivation and a sense of self-fulfilment, not authoritatively imposed. It seems that - though conflict and negotiation are present - a good deal of integration between institutions is at work. From outside, one has the feeling that the entire system is governed. Teachers and bureaucrats appear to be in command of the system, with obvious pros and cons. Ministry bureaucrats were under particular fire just before the recent elections, but I suspect that some Mediterranean countries would be more than happy to be able to rely on a bureaucracy of this sort.

As the flow chart in section 4 has shown, adopting the LL perspective means first of all that we cannot treat one piece, or one segment of the educational system detached from the rest of society, as educationists do very often. The smooth and efficient performance of a learning society depends heavily on interconnectedness and interrelatedness: sociology, organization, economics, psychology, education. Different spheres intersect and overlap: the school system, companies, family, gender, age, state, local councils, international competitiveness, quality of life, welfare, satisfaction, self-esteem, eventually international relations and peace. The Japanese story compels us to consider a different perspective, to become more aware that our own point of view is just one among many. It does not necessarily follow that we emulate Japan in her LL policies: that would be a mistake. We need to build the appropriate pre-conditions and to follow up with the appropriate implementation.

Glossary

This short glossary is necessary because the Japanese, building on a long tradition in education and having a penchant for proper definitions and rules, tend to distinguish different sorts of interventions and provisions; this is also consistent with the wide range of institutions which are involved in promoting and managing LL.

Incidental education: in a sense a residual category of LL activity, it includes all that is not already part of refresher education, social education, informal education, namely TV watching (a TV channel is dedicated to education and another one to the University of the Air), travelling, internet surfing.

Informal education: stands for all the enterprise-based, non-formal training activities that specifically mark On-the-job training in Japan. Definitely one of the most important parts of LL, but quite often unconsciously excluded from its scope. The main reason is probably connected to the fact that LL is leisure and culture-related and the Japanese are not inclined to see educational issues in an economic context.

Lifelong Learning Society: a society in which on can freely choose various learning opportunities anytime in one's life and the outcomes of such learning are appreciated properly (stress on personal choice and subjective satisfaction), while a general and western definition of a Learning Society could sound more like the following: a society which mobilizes i.e. brings into circulation, develops, and activates to the highest degree the learning opportunities for the largest number of its citizens - adults *in primis* - assuming that "the more you know, the more you can see and the better you can act" in every field, from child rearing to layoff shakeout (stress on quantity and instrumental perspective).

Recurrent education: general term used as a synonym for Adult education. As it is somewhat confusing (many adult education experiences are not recurrent), there is a plea to dismiss it.

Refresher education: learning opportunities offered to adults by formal education institutions such as universities and colleges, mainly at postgraduate level. The main aim is to lower the emphasis on initial learning and on the exams syndrome. Mainly seen as investment, examples are: night and part-time courses, courses given by open-university-type institutions, technology oriented, independent college courses. Not to be mistaken for Recurrent education. Together with social education, refresher education constitutes the *magna pars* of LL in Japan

Social education (Shakai kyoiku): learning opportunities in a wider sense, offered under the organization of Community Learning Centres (around 17,000) aimed at character building, meant to be important for the completion of personal character. Although in the field of culture/sport and mainly considered as consumption, they are not intended by the Japanese as entertainment or "for fun" activity. Together with refresher education, social education constitutes the *magna pars* of LL in Japan.

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ANNEX 1

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

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ANNEX 2

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